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The main objective of this journal is to function as a mode of information and guidance for the scholars, researchers and historians and to provide a medium of exchange of ideas in Mizo history.

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Editorial

The recent development in historical study in Mizoram is towards critical reading on its history and historiography. Since its inception in 1980, the Mizo History Association (MHA) is one of the main bodies for writing and rewriting history of the Mizos. It has been organizing annual seminars on various historical themes. The seminar proceedings are published in a journal called '*Historical Journal Mizoram*' which is one of the oldest academic journals in Mizoram; the current volume being its XIX volume. The Executive Committee of Mizo History Association chose "History and Historiography of Mizoram" as the theme of the XXXVII Annual Conference cum Seminar for 2017.

One of the main objectives of the seminar was to encourage the broadest possible range of submissions, reflecting research interests on Mizoram history and historiography with an intention to open a new arena where scholars and researchers can discuss and think together on what in Mizo history we want to develop collectively, to explore the way in which Mizo history and historiography shaped the Mizo society as well as the recollection of the Mizo past in relating to the various problems, progress, challenges, prospects and future of Mizo historical writing. Should we write history in binary opposition to colonial or missionary ethnography? Should we build Mizo history in response to the larger nation state or should we run along with the spirit of ethnicity, tribe, local or regionalism? What

will be our purpose? What will be the most fruitful way of doing history and historiography from pre-colonial to recent period? In the context of Mizoram, discussion on historical source material available and evaluation of sources is a largely discounted area.

With the western contact from the 19th Century onwards, Mizoram became an object of European investigations. Vast amount of archival materials (diaries, census, photographs, cartography, folklore, administrative reports, ethnographic book, etc.) has been produced by both colonizers and Christian Missionaries. In this critical period, Mizo history emerged as part of ethnographic tradition.

Christianity accompanied the expansion of colonialism in many parts of the world. The core of Christian Mission work has been evangelism, but the process was a big challenge. The production of knowledge on native cultural history was crucial for the Christian missionaries to adapt themselves in the new situation. Thus, the European missionaries had produced enormous ethnographic materials on the Mizos and their cognate tribes. These missionaries produced enormous archival materials in both the European and the native language. Their archival materials include vast array of materials such as personal correspondence, mission work reports, church records, statistics, photograph, folktales, history, ethnography, medical records, school records, etc.

Consciousness on thinking about the Mizo past arose among the earliest educated class. Suaka, Thangphunga, Khamliana, Makthanga, Challiana, Pasena, Rozika, R.Dala, Chuaftera, Nuchhungi, Liangkhaia, etc. play an important

role in the production of literature in Mizo language. This consciousness was also reflected in some of the earliest newspapers published in Mizo language. For instance, Lalhrima (Sesawng Chief) wrote a short article on “Hmashang Chanchin” (“narratives of ancient history”) in the first issue of *Mizo leh Vai chanchin lehkhhabu* in November 1902. Many of the earlier educated elite maintained diaries, personal writings, photographs etc. Some of them began to write ‘narrative of the Mizo past’ which appeared in a book form from post-colonial period onward.

The task of historical investigation is rendered more difficult by the absence of catalogues and bibliographical guides which could accelerate finding of historical sources in Mizoram. Some of the earlier Mizo historians such as Prof. Darchhawna, Prof. JV Hluna and Prof. Sangkima has thrown light on some few aspects on sources of Mizo history. Yet, survey on the historical sources for the study of Mizo history need to be more widely explored. The history and historiography of pre-colonial period is largely a blank space due to dearth of historical materials from neighbouring scribal culture. Recent scholars begin to utilize both *oral tradition* and *archaeological sources* to construct early Mizo history.

There is still ample scope to discuss the trends, problems and prospect of historical writing in post-colonial scenario, either history of movement (e.g. MNF movement or gender in post-colonial scenario) of post-Indian independent scenario in Mizoram or re-writing of pre or colonial period, in short - any historiographical development taking place after post independent India. And this continues to be the challenge before historians today.

In the Mizo History Association Annual Seminar that was hosted by Department of History, Govt. Aizawl West College during September 28-29, 2017, many scholars from various discipline came together and addressed the theme broadly. The seminar sessions were divided into parallel sessions in which a good numbers of scholars, research scholars, theologians, etc. presented their research findings followed by lively discussions. The articles in this journal is a collection of the papers presented in the last annual seminar. There are eighteen essays contained in this journal which cover a wide range of themes and sub-themes in terms of thematic and periodization.

The Editorial Board, on behalf of Mizo History Association, would like thank our main donor, Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) for moral and financial support which enabled MHA to organize seminars and publish journal every year.

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September, 2018

Rohmingmawii
H. Vanlalhruaia

MAPPING COLONIAL MIZORAM

Lalnurliana Sailo

One of the primary technologies of colonial control is the map. A mapped space supposes exclusion, inclusion, possession, control, and legitimates exploitation. The 'desire for power' is deeply implicated in the desire 'to make territory exclusive and map it'.¹ Maps also aims to produce rigid, fixed, arbitrary places suited to techniques of modernity in place of pre-modern ambivalent, ambiguous spaces. Maps fix communities to fixed, bounded, closed spaces. This paper attempts to analyse the spatial history of 'Mizoram' during the colonial period. The focus is on coloniality and cartography: mapping as one of the instruments in the construction of modern 'Mizoram'. Colonial practice of inscribing of place-names as 'Lushai Hills', 'Khasi Hills', 'Jaintia Hills', 'Garro Hills', 'Cachar Hills', 'Tipperah Hills' etc. were complicit in the colonial project of constructing fixed identities and places as rigid differentiated blocks on the colonial map.

Map and place

Mizoram today is a part of northeast region of India; a mapped place in the global map. A place with a distinct place-name, with identifiable group of people and well demarcated borders and boundaries-at least it appears so on the map. In

a global map of nations and national boundaries, it is difficult, almost impossible, to locate Mizoram outside a national and regional map. However, looking at this reality-each place within fixed, discontinuous, rigid national geography having sovereign and exclusive control over it -from the margin of the place shatters this comfortable conception of space, place, national geography and maps.² Lines of demarcation on the map do not demarcate place and lived spaces of communities. For example, the boundary between Mizoram (India) and Bangladesh or Myanmar appears as well defined on the map, but viewed from the position of lived spaces of people on these margins multiple social and political realities surfaces. As argued by Yhome, “that ‘national effect’ and ‘state control’ were always fragile in the margins. The ‘disjunction’ was never absent in the margins, and the ‘isomorphism’ was never present that can be disjuncted in the face of globalization. In the margins, then, questions of ‘nationhood’, ‘identity’, ‘citizenship’, ‘legitimacy’ and ‘loyalty’ were always contested and blurred.”³ Therefore, there is a need to recognise that boundaries, borders and geography of place are never given, but are contingent upon the dominant spatial arrangement imposed by dominant power.

Maps also allow or facilitate possession. As such maps are not what cartographers say it is-scientific or objective form of knowledge-but they are product of certain spatial practice and ideologies deeply implicated in the process of control, exclusion and exploitation. British-India colonial cartographic construction of the region and regions elsewhere conferred on it the power to own and rule. Maps did not represent reality but produced reality as conceived

by the dominant forms of power. Once maps become published texts, lines on it acquire authority gaining authoritarian image and even reinforce and legitimate status quo or may even become agents of change. But it is never neutral.⁴ Maps are partisan assertion about the nature of space, deployed to subject space to particular political and commercial interests, and as Bateson puts it, 'the map is not a territory but their place in it'.⁵ Maps are contingent on the cultural, social and political desires of its producers. Deconstructing the maps allow us to accept the indeterminacy and contingency of boundaries, borders, regionality, and territoriality.

The technology of map and map making has been fundamental to colonialism, expansion and imperialism of the west. Map was the instrument through which European explorers and settlers translated the landscapes into objects to be comprehended, colonised and consumed. Maps are not mere representation of space. As Thongchai puts it,

In terms of most communication theories and common sense, a map is a scientific abstraction of reality. A map merely represents something which already exists objectively 'there'. In the history I have described, this relationship was reversed. A map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words, a map was model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent.⁶

Maps produce place and locations, borders and boundaries of people inhabiting it. Mapping a place with marked borders facilitates ownership, inclusion, exclusion and control. Colonial power conceptualised space differently from the indigenous people they colonised in the present

day northeast India, and in the process displaced indigenous spaces.

Producing colonial Mizoram

Historically, British-India's colonisation project in the northeast frontier centred on erasure of non-state spaces, rather than a long-drawn out battle with few mimetic states. These states were annexed to the British-India Empire without any resistances by the ruling elites. Resistance to colonial rule came from the 'wild' mobile 'tribes' inhabiting the spaces between these mimetic states. In order to colonise these 'wild' tribes, the in-between spaces had to be rendered geographically legible. This objective was made possible by imagining the wild tribes as distinct communities and subsequently fixing them inside colonial produced geographies.

The British project of governance entailed first defining the territory and fixing the boundary, and an understanding of the realm contained therein in terms of people and things. Topographic surveys were usually conducted to enhance geographical knowledge of the land, which would then enable the colonial authorities to formulate a suitable strategy for the colonial expansion and consolidation of colonial rule and the formulation of suitable administrative system.

Intimate knowledge on topography provided 'information on the location of villages, roads, and natural resources'; and the making of maps facilitated 'troop movements'; the establishment of military outposts;

selection of 'human settlements and commercial centres,' and the drawing of administrative divisions.⁷

Thus, an attempt to develop systematic information on Mizoram even before it was actually colonized was undertaken by means of 'topographic surveying, exploration and the drawing of accurate maps'.⁸ The first organized effort to acquire topographical knowledge on colonial Mizoram was made during the 'Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872'. The Survey Department of India sent survey parties to accompany the two columns (the Chittagong Column and the Cachar Column) of the expedition separately.⁹

The survey party attached to the Chittagong Column was headed by Major J. MacDonald, an officer of the Survey Department to push north from Chittagong and map the land that thence was *terra incognita* to the British.¹⁰ Mackenzie informs us that this survey operation undertaken in southern Mizoram succeeded in completing a triangulation of 2,300 and topographical mapping of 1,700 square miles connected with the eastern frontier series of the great trigonometrical survey.¹¹

Captain Badgley led another survey party attached to the Cachar Column of the 1871-72 Lushai expeditions. This party consisted of R.G. Woodthorpe, Lieutenant Leach, and three Civil Surveyors of the Topographical Survey Department, attended by a large establishment of instrument-carriers, and three sets of instruments.¹² This party started exploration work from Cachar and accomplished the exploration work of 'about 600 square

miles of triangulation, with nearly 200 linear miles of route survey and 4,800 square miles of triangulation.’^{13 14}

According to Alexander Mackenzie:

There remains a blank in longitude between the two portions of the survey which overlap in latitude; and also another gap in latitude between the northern limits of the tract surveyed by the Chittagong party and the southern boundary surveyed by the Cachar party.¹⁵

These efforts were followed up during the winter of 1872-73 in an effort to demarcate the eastern boundary of Tripura.¹⁶ The inability of these survey operations to completely cover the entire Mizoram during this time delayed the task of completing the topographical mapping of the area for more than a decade. After the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886, the colonial authorities advocated permanent pacification and domination of Mizos and their territory in order to ensure political and economic security and stability of their empires in India and Burma. This new consideration accelerated the need to produce intimate knowledge on the topography of Mizoram to formulate military strategy and the immediate mapping of the region for colonial governance.

Accordingly, in January 1888, two Survey Parties—one under the command of Lieutenant J.F. Stewart and the other under the command of Lieutenant Baird were sent from Calcutta for reconnaissance work in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to collect military information and enlarge the existing maps of the British.¹⁷ However, a topographical survey on the Mizoram could not be completed once again due to the

unfortunate incident faced by the Survey Party of Stewart, in which Stewart himself and three other British military personnel were killed by a head-hunting party led by a Pawi chief named Hausata.¹⁸

After the establishment of British rule in the Mizoram, the second Chin-Lushai Conference held at Lunglei in December 1896 resolved that a topographical survey of the Chin-Lushai Hills was to be carried out at an early date, and this matter had separately been considered in the Revenue and Agriculture Department.¹⁹ In pursuance of this resolution an extensive survey operation was conducted under the supervision of Captain Robertson in the areas, which were not yet covered by previous efforts.²⁰

As a result of this extensive survey, Lushai Hills (Colonial Mizoram)-previously a 'wild' and unknown space sandwiched by the settled and mapped spaces of British India as a fixed and enclosed space with defined boundaries was produced in 1898.²¹ The mapping of the area enable the colonial authority to fix places and communities which in turn facilitate effective 'pacification' and governance of colonial Mizoram.

Unlike other parts of India where cartographic knowledge was used for demarcating revenue and administrative districts, in Mizoram, it was employed to adjudicate contesting claims on land among Mizo chiefs. After demarcating their lands, chiefs were given various responsibilities to assist the colonial government in exchange for the mapping of their village boundary. After demarcating their boundary, the chiefs were given the responsibility of

maintaining peace and security; making and improving roads within their jurisdiction; to provide assistance and hospitality to the touring government officials who were usually despatched to collect revenue in the form of house tax and *corvee*; and to obtain necessary information from different villages.²² In this way, cartographic knowledge and the mapping of Mizoram had enormously enabled the colonial government to consolidate their rule and run the administration effectively in the region while incurring minimum expenses on account of governing it.

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- ³ Kekhreisituo Yhome, 2007. *Politics of Region: The Making of Naga Identity during Colonial and Postcolonial Era*, Borderland <http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol6no3_2007/yhome_region.htm> (accessed February 12, 2008).
- ⁴ See J B Harley, *Deconstructing the Map*, op cit.
- ⁵ Quoted in Robert Paine's, *Aboriginality, Authenticity and the Settler's World*, p.104.
- ⁶ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p.110.
- ⁷ Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p. 316.
- ⁸ Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and other Essays* Oxford University Press India, New Delhi, 1992, p. 231.
- ⁹ Alexander Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 316.

- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 316.
- ¹¹ Alexander Mackenzie, op.cit., pp. 316-317.
- ¹² R.G. Woodthorpe, *The Lushai Expedition: 1871-1872*, Hurst & Blackett, London, 1873, p.53.
- ¹³ Alexander Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 317.
- ¹⁴ Mizoram' was initially considered to belong to Tipperah. However, after colonial military expedition in 1872 (to punish the Kookies for attacking tea plantations in Cachar Hills) into these mountainous terrain, the English realised that Tipperah never claimed jurisdiction over these hills. The discussion on the reports sent by the expedition party concluded that, since the territory did not belonged to the local Rajas (Cachar, Manipur and Tipperah), 'this Lushai country lying between eastern boundary of Hill Tipperah and Burmese frontier belonged to England'. Major MacDonald, Caption Tanner and Caption Badley, "The Lushai Expedition", *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1872-1873), p.54 (accessed June 02, 20017).
- ¹⁵ Alexander Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 317.
- ¹⁶ Foreign Deptt. Proceeding no.44 Letter from secretary to the government of India, Foreign Department, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, No. 7P, dated Fort William, 2nd January, 1874.
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- ²² J. Shakespear, 'Sappui Thu' reproduced in *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, 10th Issue, October 1934, p.150

WRITING ABOUT OUR PAST: REFLECTIONS ON THE COLONIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF WILDNESS

Lalruatkima

While our oral traditions suggest an earlier provenance, our written histories start with the works of British agents working in what would become the Lushai Hill Districts in the middle of the nineteenth century. Whether Francis Buchanan, Thomas Lewin, or those that preceded or followed them, their writings about people in the region have over time archived into the historical substance of Mizoram as a subset of a modern nation.

By focusing on the “archive” as a verb rather than as a noun, I underscore the need to move away from our instinctive notions with regard to a stable and unitary consciousness about the past. Thomas Richards reminds us that, “the archive was neither a library nor a museum Rather the imperial archive was a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of state and Empire”.¹ Reminiscent of Foucault’s caution about epistemic regimes—the set of rules for a given period for a given society that

regulates what is: sayable, conserved, and discarded²—Richards helps us locate a particular configuration of archiving: imperial formations. The link between the construction and curating of knowledge and the imaginations and perpetuation of an empire requires more than just accessing the past for a sense of history. Rather, in line with the Subaltern Studies Group,³ a critical access of the past requires one to “read” than just “listen” to these archives; reading against the grain to get a sense of the various way in which epistemic regimes of empire represented the problematic figure of the Lushai.

Archiving is inextricably linked to writing, that seemingly innocuous technology which has transformed historical consciousness.⁴ Given this problem of writing, how is it that Mizos came to write about the past, and more importantly, write in English? The answers could range from the obvious to more nuanced readings of the archives that construct us as tendentious subjects: that is, Mizo. Before I delve into the details of the dynamics I have set up, let me quickly bring in scholar of religion Vincent Wimbush. In his analysis of the Black Atlantic genre of slave narratives, Wimbush constructs a neologism “scripturalization” to get at the, “semiosphere within which a structure of reality is created that produces and legitimates and maintains media of knowing and discourse and the corresponding power relations”.⁵ I bring Wimbush into conversation because I think his neologism ties together the issues I am trying to get at. Our perceptions of the past, that which we collapse as a stabilized history, is a semiosphere or a world of signs and contemporary significations arrived at through prevailing epistemic regimes that are structured around asymmetrical

relations of power. By focusing on two archival moments, I hope to tease out some questions for who, what, and how we continue our writing projects.

We were once wild

The British had a learning curve when it came to coexisting with our fore-parents. Alexander Mackenzie, Home Secretary to the Government of India, presents what seemed like an endemic problem plaguing the northeast frontier of Bengal in the nineteenth century. In what is now among the most definitive of compendia on late nineteenth century British policy in the northeast frontier of Bengal, Mackenzie identifies the source of the problem as the numerous “savage and warlike tribes” surrounding the Assam valley. These tribes “advanced claims to rights more or less definite over lands lying in the plains; others claimed tributary payments from the villages below their hills or the services of *paiks* said to have been assigned them by the Assam authorities”.⁶ British policy in the region was geared to reconcile with such arrangements. However, Mackenzie was doubtful about the prospects of any immediate resolution: “But we are met to this day by difficulties arising from the indefinite nature of the connexion subsisting between the Assam sovereigns and their savage neighbors”.⁷

Foregrounded against an ascendant British empire, categories such as wildness, savagery and warlike-ness are inextricably linked to colonial statecraft that included legislation, spatial organization, administrative order, and structures of power. Given these dynamics that are at play, wildness or savagery must be more than innate or self-evident predicates. Mackenzie notes that Assam’s problems with

the neighboring hill folk over land rights and tributary payment preceded the British arrival. However, “the engagements under which the Native Governments lay were transferred to us with the peculiar revenue described above”.⁸ Long-standing administrative issues seemingly transferred in the British takeover of administration in this frontier region. The naming of wild tribes, as opposed to an apparently well-defined Assam, belies the lack of information about the finer details of the problem at hand. Hence, the notion of wildness conveys not only an exercise in cultural comparison but also the construction of knowledge in the imagination and maintenance of an imperial economy.

Taming the wild

Within the backdrop of the Khasis, Garos, and other hill folks that were mapped into the imperial economy by the middle of the nineteenth century, the thematic link between wildness and a perception of lack recurs through most references about the Lushais. This link harks back to the fact that the Lushais seemed to have held out a little longer than their neighboring hill folks. Adam Scott Reid (1848-1918), the Surgeon Lieutenant Colonel with the Indian Medical Service records his observations as the medical officer in charge of the 4th Gurkha Rifles attached to the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-90. Reid opens his memoir with a lengthy quote from an article that appeared in the *Englishman*:

‘The future of the Lushai-land may be foreseen from what we know of the Khasia Hills that lie to the north of it. Sixty years ago the Khasias, who are the bravest and most warlike of all the wild tribes of India, were more bloodthirsty than the Lushais. On the 4th of April 1829, they rose in

arms and murdered Lieutenants Bedingfield and Burlton and some sepoys. That led to the inevitable military expedition which was protracted through several cold seasons, and the accounts of which differ from the accounts of the present Lushai Expedition chiefly in the determined resistance offered by the brave hill-men armed only with bows and arrows and *dhas*. The last of the Khasia chiefs did not tender his submission till 1833, and for the next twenty years Colonel Lister was the Political Agent with the tribes. In his time Welsh missionaries entered the hills, learned the strange language, and reduced it to writing, prepared a grammar and vocabulary, introduced a printing press and opened schools.

Now the Khasias are running the Bengalis a close race as clerks and accountants in the *cutcheries* (Government offices) at Shillong [in the Khasi Hills district]; their foremost youths are aspiring to University degrees; and in female education they are officially stated to take the lead of all the Indian races. There can be no doubt that the future of the Lushais will be similar, whichever missionary denomination enters the field. A few years will see the hillsides dotted with schools, while the garrison at Haka [Burma] Sangal Klang and Fort Treager [Lushai hills] will be asked for subscriptions to build churches.⁹

The *Englishman*, which considered itself “the mouthpiece of the British race in the east,”¹⁰ published court orders and circulars, and had barristers, and judges stationed at Calcutta weighing in on its reportage.¹¹ Though not particularly of a legal nature, the article in question stakes out Britain’s place in India by way of elaborations on savagery or wildness, and the decisiveness

of British presence and influence. The Khasis come across as poster-folks for the British empire; as formerly belligerent and almost childish errant hill folks who have embraced the British ways and now, in exemplary fashion, “take the lead of all races.”

The argument for wildness here again is both temporal and temporary. It is a temporal argument in that the rationale for wildness invokes a past which progresses into a future condition. That past is characterized by a cultural lack primarily defined in contrast to what Britain represented, whether it was the lack of arms and weaponry or of social conduct such as being warlike and presumably bloodthirsty. The argument is also temporary in the sense that wildness did not have to be a permanent state of existence. This wild condition had the perfect panacea in the project of the British Empire. A strange language could be tamed and reduced into the measured technology of writing with established rules of grammar and vocabulary. Education would induct the wild folks into British ways, open access to privileges and services introduced by an emerging colonial economy, and discipline wild folks for fuller participation just as civilized Khasis. The role of missionaries in this case emerges as a critical component of imperial formations. While not much is said about the lack of religion among the wild races, the focal point seems to be that even if there were phenomena that could be classified as religion, it would still be short of, or lagging behind, that represented by and in the imperial economy. Hence, the role of missionaries in bringing the wild religion, if there be any, up to time with that of Christianity would be an integral component of the larger colonial practice.

The comparison between the Khasis and the Lushais was of a temporal kind. As long as the Lushais held out against the imperial structure, they remained in a wild past much like that of the pre-1833 Khasis. By placing Lushais in the narrative of the Khasis' progress, holding out against the empire comes across as a futile pursuit. It would be only a matter of time that Lushais would come to terms with and submit to British presence and influence in their region. Implicitly, the thrust of this comparison was that the Lushais, unlike the Khasis, were not yet ready for civilization. An intervention in this state of lack or being unprepared boded well for imperial formations in that the introduction of British ways of being and doing would facilitate and moderate fuller participation in the empire as disciplined and civilized Lushais.

Inevitably, legislation was an important medium in the execution of this imperial regime of power. Our fore-parents did not write down their social contracts and agreements. The legal Word replaced the malleable oral traditions quite decisively. Every statute or legislation and their subsequent revisions issued by the various offices of empire dictated and refined the terms by which subject populations could participate and partake in the benefits of the emerging political economy.

'To instill the desire for progress in the non-European world, it was necessary to inscribe modern Western categories into the administrative and legal discourse of the world. It was through such discursive powers that people undergoing "modernization" were compelled to abandon old practices and turn to new ones.'¹²

In this sense, there were no actual wild races simply out there. In the organization of imperial space, there were people beyond the fluctuating boundaries of empire who were not-quite and not-yet British enough. Violent instances of intercultural contact would eventually give way to British dominance by way of military superiority, and sustenance through the introduction of British, or non-wild, ways of doing things. These wild and othered races had to respond to and be facilitated by categories brought into play by the imperial formations at work.¹³ In another sense, wild races had to respond to the radical and enduring changes as conscripts of empire.

Conclusion

One has to peer beneath the obvious inferences or “historical facts” about wildness— and other categories of cultural comparison such as “primitive” or “savage”— in order to understand their seemingly compelling registrations. Rather than indicate an ontology about people or what they are innately and essentially, wildness is a foil for the inability in the exercise of power and lapses in articulation of the strange and different. By reading between the lines or by reading against the grain of imperial archives and the events and phenomena that inform these imaginations, the category of wildness emerges as a critical handle for the cultural significations in the execution of colonial theory and practice. In the asymmetrical relations of power that was British India, wildness was an effective and constitutive shorthand for the conscription of peoples in to the imperial narrative, to eventually be “better” than they were.

Archiving and epistemic regimes engender the decisive written word. Official documents and reports that constitute the imperial archives seem, in hindsight, to have simply written wildness into existence. It is this aspect of the written word that heightens the notion of con-scription, that specific technology of power which inscribes peoples on to a dominant narrative. The British Empire is long gone; we now wax historical and that too, in English. What does it say about what we do and in what way we do it? How might we write in such a way that we avoid perpetuating the same dominant modes of representation that once conscripted us? What are the epistemic regimes that determine how and about what we write? How might Mizos writing about the Mizo past instantiate an intervention in our problematically scripturalized worlds? Although these questions are intended to be rhetorical, engaging them will determine the integrity and level of engagement with which Mizos continue to write especially about our past.

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IDEOLOGY OF COLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND MIZO HISTORY WRITING

Lalrameng K. Gangte

The term 'Colonial Historiography' has been used in two senses. One relates to the history of the colonial countries while the other refers to the works which were influenced by colonial ideology of domination. It is in the second sense that most historians write about the colonial historiography. The dominant (though not true in all cases) colonial ideology was an 'orientalist' representation of India, promoting the idea of the superiority of modern western civilization, that India was a stagnant society arrested at a stage of development and British rule would show the path of progress to a higher level. Therefore, Colonial historiography was part of an ideological effort to appropriate history as a means of establishing cultural hegemony and legitimising British rule over India. The basic idea embedded in the tradition of colonial historiography was, thus, the paradigm of a backward society's progression towards the pattern of modern European civil and political society under the tutelage of the imperial power. Indian society was

considered to be stagnant and backward and therefore needed an 'enlightened' western civilization and culture to herald in 'better' changes. My attempt in this paper is to look at some of the western writings on the Mizos in the light of the ideology mentioned above and see if these writings conform to the ideology of colonial historiography prevalent at the time.

The earliest written works about the Mizo were produced almost exclusively by westerners, mainly military and administrative officers who had some connection with Mizoram. This connection was related to the annexation and administration of the area by the British government. Some of the earliest works on the Mizo were three books written by Tom Herbert Lewin, *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein* (1869), *Wild Races of South-Eastern India* (1870) and *A fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India* (1912). Another of this period was C.A.Soppitt's *A short Account of the Kuki-Lushai tribes on the North-eastern frontier with an Outline Grammar of the Rangkhel-Lushai language and A Comparison of Lushai with other Dialects* (1893). These works provide us with the earliest substantial information about the Mizo. A second type of writing comes from military officers who gave detailed accounts of military operations in what were referred to as the Chin-Lushai Hills. These include R.G.Woodthorpe's *The Lushai Expedition, 1871-72* (1872), A.S.Reid's *Chin-Lushai Land: Including a Description of the Various Expeditions into the Chin- Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country, with Maps and Illustrations* (1893), and L. W. Shakespear's *History of the Assam Rifles* (1929). The efforts made by the British government to bring the Chin Hills of Burma and the North and South Lushai

hill districts of India into a single administrative unit resulted in the publication of two books. The first of these was Bertram S. Carey and H. N. Tuck's *The Chin Hills: A History of the people, Our Dealings with Them, Their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country*, Vol.1 (1896, reprinted 1976) and the other was John Shakespear's *The Lushei Kuki Clans* Parts I and II (1912). William Shaw's *Notes on the Thadou Kukis* (1919) and G. A. Grierson's monumental work *Linguistic Survey of India*, III, 3 (1904) were based on a certain degree of anthropological analysis and show us the nature of Mizo society and culture just at the time the area was beginning to come under the British administration. Another book is N.E.Parry's *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* (1928). After the establishment of British administration in the Lushai hills, works written by the British include Sir Robert Reid's *The Lushai Hills* (1942), N. E. Parry's *The Lakhers* (1932) and A. G. McCall's *Lushai Chrysalis* (1949). Another book of A. G. McCall prepared during 1938-39 was *The Lushai Hills District Cover* (1972).

Though the post-independence period saw quite a few works on the Mizos by both Mizo and non-Mizo writers, it was the British writers who made the earliest attempts on the Mizos and therefore, made a tremendous contribution to understanding of Mizo culture and society. In attempting to see whether the ideology of colonial historiography is also discernable in the writings on the Mizos necessitated a mention at some of the writings on the study of the impact of Christianity upon Mizo society by the British. These were Grace R. Lewis' *The Lushai Hills: The Story of the Lushai Pioneer Mission* (1970), M. E. Browser's *Light on the Lushai Hills: The*

story of Our Foreign Mission (1930), Dorothy F. Glovers' *Set on a Hill: The record of Forty Years in the Lushai Country* (1944) and David Kyle's *Lorrain of the Lushais: Romance and Realism on the North-East frontier of India* (1944). In these writings, the missionaries and their activities constitute an institutionalized attempt at proselytization and they presented a consistent critique of the Mizo society and culture which together constitute the core ideas in the discourse of orientalism. With missionary expansion as their motive, the Mizos were looked upon as 'objects of missionary work'¹. Their descriptions of the moral and religious life of the people were meant to solicit support in bringing about changes 'for the better' in that culture. They sought to adopt western culture in place of the traditional Mizo society and to convert them to Christianity.

Among the British writers mentioned above, two writers who dwelt on deep anthropological insights into the culture and society of the Mizos were N. E. Parry and A. G. McCall who were Superintendents of the Lushai Hills from 1924-1928 and 1932-1942 respectively. Though Parry didn't stay long in the Lushai Hills, he left an indelible mark with the publication of his two important books '*A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*' (1928) and '*The Lakhers*' (1932). Earlier, he had also written '*Mizo Dan*' which was a Mizo version of 'Monograph' in 1927². 'Monograph' was written as 'an attempt to record the customs by which Lushais were governed in their daily lives and according to which cases are decided by the chiefs and courts'³. As the Superintendent of the then Lushai Hills, Parry found it difficult in 'trying cases to ascertain the correct custom'⁴. In consultation with 56 chiefs of that time, the publication

of this important book was made thereby the first written record of the Mizo customs emerged. It is reliable in that it was written after consultation with many Chiefs who were the arbiter of Mizo laws and customs of the time. It also significantly altered the image of the Mizo in the minds of the literate outsiders. As the name of the book suggests, '*The Lakhers*' deals mainly with the history and culture of the Maras (called Lakhers by the Lushais), a clan of Mizo who lived in the south eastern corner of Mizoram. It was Parry's period of *Superintendency* that the Lakher area was included in Mizoram⁵. Parry gives deep anthropological insights into the life and culture of the Maras. The work is well illustrated and includes a glossary of vernacular terms, some folklore tales and a good index. Readers of folk-lore will be specially interested in the animal stories given at the end of the volume as specimens of Lakher folk tales. Similarly, A. G. McCall's book *Lushai Chrysalis* was an attempt to explain government policies to protect the Mizo customs and traditions from 'over-zealous' outsiders. Another book of McCall *The Lushai Hills District Cover* was also an attempt to give guidance to administrators seeking to base British rule on traditional, if slightly modified forms of the Government through the Chiefs. If one looks at the writings of these two writers, against the colonial ideology of critique of Indian culture and traditions and trying to impose cultural hegemony, they rather tried to protect Mizo customs and traditions.

Just as Parry and McCall were deeply interested in Mizo culture, they were equally interested in preserving it. A look at their writings on some aspects of Mizo society will bear testimony to this.

Zawlbuk: Zawlbuk (bachelor's dormitory), the most important social institution among the different clans of the Mizo, except for the Mara clan, was the nerve centre of the Mizo society and it shaped the youths into responsible adult members of the society⁶. Parry considered Zawlbuk to be a most useful institution and stressed its importance in the Mizo society when he made a comparison between the Lusei clan and Mara clan. He found a strong contrast between the "much indisciplined" character and lack of control in the Mara villages with the situation among the Luseis. "A young Mara when ordered to do something by an elder," wrote Parry, will argue, where a Lusei will obey at once."⁷ He ascribes this difference to the existence of Zawlbuk among the Lusei and the absence of any such institution among the Mara. With the progress of education in the Lushai Hills, the importance of Zawlbuk gradually diminished. In 1924, when Parry came to Mizoram, Zawlbuk was almost abandoned by the Mizos. Convinced of the important role it played in the Mizo society, he issued an order to maintain it. In Aizawl, Thakthing locality was asked to rebuild Zawlbuk⁸. But the importance of the institution further declined and was ultimately abolished by legislation during the period of A.C. McCall. Parry thus failed to revive the institution.

Tlawmngaihna: The spirit of Tlawmngaihna was another aspect which Parry found admirable in Mizo culture. He states, "Tlawmngaihna therefore deserves every encouragement, as if it were allowed to fall into desuetude it would be most detrimental to the whole of the tribe"⁹. In "Monograph", he cites several examples in explaining the meaning of Tlawmngaihna. Though Zawlbuk disappeared,

Tlawmngaihna survived. The survival of Tlawmngaihna however does not mean that it was unaffected. While Zawlbuk way of life was declining, there was also a perceptible decline in discipline and morality among the youth which provoked Parry to make a rather harsh comment, "No one can pretend that it is a good thing that Tlawmngaihna, while still practised by heathen Lusheis, should often be conspicuous by its absence among Christian Lushei Communitites; the reverse should be the case, and the fact is that it is not so is due to the failure in the past to study and make use of Lushei Custom"¹⁰. Parry placed the blame squarely upon the missionaries whose work in "ignorance of the Mizo custom caused as much harm as the good they had done"¹¹. Though his opinion in this matter is not entirely true, it certainly shows that he was keen to preserve the Mizo culture several of which he found it admirable.

Bawi: A person who surrendered himself to a Mizo chief for any reason was commonly called a bawi. The bawi system in Mizoram has been variously described, ranging from a form of social security to slavery. In the absence of any other means of caring for the destitute, it had a charitable dimension. So when it was abolished after the efforts of a missionary like Dr. Peter Fraser and the Mizo Christians, McCall apprehended that the 'legacy is the Lushai beggar, the outcasts for whom the society has no provision'¹². He was not against the abolition but he opined that alternative provisions had to be made for the freed bawi. Regarding Mizo customs he too believed in preserving it and he quotes by saying, "if changes come and come they must, it must come from within, not without and let provisions for the effects be made"¹³

Critique of Christian Missions

As against the colonial ideology of criticism of Indian society and culture and glorification of western culture and values, Parry and McCall were concerned about the changes that came upon the Mizo society as a result of the impact of western culture through the activities of the Christian missions. They tended to see the government as the upholder and preserver of the customs of the people over against the “full scale assault” of those customs launched by the missionaries, whom, Parry believed, were denationalizing the people¹⁴. McCall also admitted that while change was inevitable, he pleaded that it should be indigenously ignited and properly guided, and not forced on the people by outsiders like the missionaries. Parry felt the need for “missionaries to receive some training, at least in anthropology” when sent out to work among the tribals¹⁵. He maintained that mission work when first started among the Mizo, it was “carried on largely by the light of nature, without training or knowledge of the customs of the people”¹⁶. Mission influence, he stated, “therefore has been largely destructive, good customs having been destroyed and not replaced”¹⁷. Thus, he said, “No use was made of the Zawlbuk or bachelor’s house, nor of the custom of tlawmngaihna”¹⁸. He was equally sceptical of the prohibition of drinking Zu on the early Christians. He found it wrong to assert abstinence from drink as an essential tenet of Christianity. He encouraged temperance rather than insist on prohibition¹⁹. Needless to say, this attitude of Parry finds relevance even in today’s context.

Critique of their work

Parry and McCall's works can be classified as Colonial Ethnography. Colonial Ethnography treated tribals as mere objects of analysis. In spite of their deep interest in the Mizo customs and cultures, their writings remained within the colonial discursive paradigm. At the same time, Parry's both anthropological works was geared largely to the need of colonial administration. He was bound by his officialdom to make a study of the people under his charge. He himself admitted that "Monograph" was compiled because he "found it extremely difficult in trying cases to ascertain the correct custom"²⁰. So, it was meant to gain knowledge about the Mizo so as to enable colonial governance. Similarly, McCall's writings were meant to explain government policies. In this sense, anthropology is said to have developed as part of the colonial administrative system. In order to implement imperialist and colonial policies in the countries they conquered and brought under their rule, the compilation of knowledge about these people was necessary. So certain anthropologists turned out to be apologists of the colonial regimes. The two writers are also no different from this typology. Such a study often lacked the understanding and interpretation in historical perspective, but only provided data for administrative purposes.

Conclusion

In spite of the limitations stated above, Parry rendered yeoman's service to Mizo history (writing) as one who gave us the first written record of Mizo customs. 'The Lakhers' provides us a deep anthropological insight into the life and culture of the Maras. McCall's work even though it was written as guidelines for the administration of the Lushai

Hills, it had preservation of Mizo customs and traditions in mind. Though their writings are not free from bias, their contribution is valuable insofar as they provide the scholar with a basis for understanding subsequent changes.

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ORAL TRADITION AS A SOURCE OF PRE-COLONIAL HMAR HISTORY

Vanrammawii

Introduction

The Hmar belongs to the *Kuki-Chin-Mizo* group of the *Sino-Tibeto-Burman* family of the *Mongolian* race.¹ They are one of the earliest settlers of present Mizoram.² Presently, they are mostly concentrated in the northern part of Mizoram, besides scattering in the extreme corner (border area) of Manipur, Mizoram, Cachar and North Cachar Hills of Assam and Tripura.³

The Hmar before the colonial period were non-literate. It was the Christian missionaries who were responsible for introducing their dialect into writing, and teaching them how to read and write.⁴ As such, no written records is to be found of the pre-colonial Hmar's past. The first writing about the Hmar/Mizo⁵ happens to be incidentally by the colonial administrator cum ethnographers. The later had their best interest at heart, often making a painstaking attempt of justifying imperialism. For instance, the manner in which they describe the conquest of the Mizo speaks for itself, '*one long sickening story of open insults and defiance, bold outrages and cold blooded murders on the one side and long*

*suffering forbearance, forgiveness, concession and unlooked favours on the other'*⁶ The fact that they arrived unannounced and uninvited in their doorstep never seems to crossed their mind. In the face of such disposition, their writings cannot be relied as a comprehensive source without any reservation. Moreover, they are silent about their ancestral home and settlement pattern prior to their immigration to present Mizoram. From A. S. Reid to A. G. McCall and even to Shakespear, they failed to show any interest in their past prior to their settlement in present Mizoram. It was only from the 20th century that the Hmars became conscious about their past and the need to put down the same in writing. The first major writing about the Hmar by the Hmar is *Hmar Chanchin (Hmar History)* by Hranglien Songate, who had made an extensive study between 1928 to 1970, conducting field work, and of course he had to rely on oral traditions extensively.⁷

Meaning of oral tradition

According to Jan Vansina, "Oral Traditions as a source of history can be define as verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation. Where the message must be oral statements spoken, sung, or called out on musical instruments only, and transmitted by word of mouth over at least a generation. Traditions need not be clichés or narratives, nor is the conscious intent to testify about the past necessary."⁸ It may also be defined as a body of knowledge that has been handed down by word of mouth over several generations and is collectively owned by the members of a given society.⁹ It is a collective action which informs as well as symbolize the permanent and changing precepts and values of the society, embodying

wisdom and achievements. In a way, Oral Tradition almost always tends to portrayed cultural reality. It covers a wide range of subject matter and can be found in a variety of form such as folktales, folklores, chants, poems, folk songs, etc.¹⁰

History of oral tradition

In spite of the utilization of the bulk of evidences which are in the form of account of an eyewitness by Herodotus, the father of history and Thucydides, the father of Psychological history,¹¹ nevertheless, the ancient form of writing was given a setback during the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 18th and 19th centuries witness an emergence of a strong school of documentary and scientific history, supported by Newtonian science and therefore reacting against another tradition of literary history accusing it of fanciful, self-serving, and unreliable. Popular among them were Leopold von Ranke and Charles Seignobos, who insisted on relying to the relatively “hard” evidence found in documents and on analyzing critically of their form and content. In the light of such an ambiance, memory is greatly suspected and is seen as subject to both intentional and unintentional distortion.¹² It was only in the 1950s that historians begin to grasp the value of oral tradition and felt it imperative to evaluate it carefully for its historical content and to lay down procedure for its interpretation and its collection.¹³

In the post Second World War era, oral tradition has been widely employed by the third world countries who were denied their past by their colonizer. Africa served a

good example here. The fact that they lack written records before colonial intervention aggravated their pathetic situation. For instance, according to A. G. McCall, *"history may be said to constitute an accurate and systematic record of events any authoritative and detailed history of early Lushai at this late stage can no longer be attempted"*.¹⁴ The above statement amounted to the insinuation of the Mizo as having no past beyond their present settlement due to lack of written records. In this juncture, the greatest challenge to historian writing about the Mizo is to provide them an extended past, to which the oral tradition served as a ready panacea.

How far is oral tradition reliable as a historical source?

According to Marc Bloch, the word 'history' which simply means 'inquiry' still retain its term, since its first appearance on the lips of man more than two millenniums ago, although its content has changed a great deal.¹⁵ To John Tosh, sources for history *encompass every kind of evidence that human beings have left of their past activities*.¹⁶ To R G Collingwood, historical evidence to be a historical evidence depends on our perception, meaning they become one, i.e a historical evidence if we consider them as one.¹⁷ If we are to agree with the above statement, oral traditions, no doubt are to be regarded as part and parcel of historical sources. However, the question does remains, how far can we rely on it as historical sources.

Oral Traditions in the forms of folksongs, folklores and ritual chants are indispensable to the reconstruction of the pre-colonial hmar history. Although they are illiterate, their folksongs are a reminiscence of their long past experiences,

reflecting their values, ethos and the places they once had inhabited.¹⁸

In spite of the importance and contributions of oral tradition, it is assualted with criticism from various angle. Firstly, oral tradition is criticized for its method of spontaneous transmission that leave a wide room for distortion as they are handed down from generation to generation. It is also criticized on the ground of the feebleness of the human mind in recounting the past. It is also attacked for its subjective nature and its inclination to the political rights, privileges and position which it claims.¹⁹ However, in the words of E. H. Carr, “the believe in a hard-core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one that is very hard to eradicate”.²⁰ Furthermore, even with the case of written documents, the document speaks of only what the author of the document wishes to convey.²¹ So, the bias attitude against oral tradition could be nothing more than eurocentrism.

Another accusation is lack of chronology by oral tradition, while precise dates is argued for written sources.²² This argument can also be analyzed in a whole new perspective. From the middle of the 20th century onward, Annales historian propagated an interdisciplinary approach involving structural changes in the study of history by applying comparative and regressive methods to the study of history. They argued that history could not be satisfactorily recreated from a patchwork of particular facts. They advocated that the historian could enhance the knowledge of the past only by agreeing to draw freely from

sociology, geography, psychology and economics without disregarding documents and of course scholarly concern.²³ If the same approach is applied to oral tradition, we will arrive at a better term with the chronological issues. For instance, Hranglien Songate using folk songs as a base propagated *Sinlung* to be one of the oldest known settlement of the ancestor of the Hmar, from hence they move southward to their next major settlement *Shan*, from *Shan* to *Kawlphai*, then finally to *Champhai*. To support his claim, he dished out a couple of folksongs. Below is one such song

Khaw Sinlungah Kawt siel ang ka zuong suok a,

Mi le nel lo tam e, Hriemi hraiah

("In the city of Sinlung I jumped out like a mithun, Innumerable were the encounters, with the children of men.")²⁴

From the above, supposing that even if *Sinlung* is accepted as the ancestral home of the hmar, the one thing that continues to perplexed us is the question of the location and the time of the inhabitation by them. To support his claim, Songate put forth his interview with Chao-En-Ti, regarding a Chinese folklore. According to the later, a peculiar people calling themselves *Manmasi* migrated from Northern China and set up a settlement at *Aopatong*, which was named *Sinlung* after their leader *Sunglung*. In course of time, they were forcibly driven out to escapes the cruel Chinese King *Shih Huangti*.²⁵ It might be worthwhile to consider the above claim because, Qin Shih Huang happens to rule from 259 BC to 210 BC, and that he had engaged a forced labourer to build the great Great Wall of China.²⁶ Darliensung Hmar, based on the route of migration from the northeast to the southwest during the 3rd century BC, and on linguistic basis,

he equated *Sinlung* with the Yalung bank's Sinlung, since it also spelled S-I-N-L-U-N-G, as is originally known to the Hmars since time immemorial, which situated at 100:50°E and 31:30°N.²⁷ Until and unless a more acceptable theory cropped up, to discard them as fanciful would amount to denying a non-elite society to construct their tribal side of their story devoid of colonial influence.

Oral traditions are also criticized for not being static, and the mode of their handing down from generation to generation leaving a wide room for alteration. For instance, each time the story is retold chances of recreating anew around the received core or skeleton is high. Moreover, there is continual regeneration of traditions as they are often adapted to express the existing collective conscience and *as the words of the past become congruent with the values and images of the present and take on contemporary meanings*.²⁸ Such was the case of the chants connected with the ritual performed by the Hmar to invoke the deity/spirit of the food grain.

*Fang Zuong rawh, fang zuong rawh,
Ni le Phaia fang zuong rawh; Khaw Sinlunga fang zuong rawh,
Kachin leia fang zuong rawh; Kawlphaia fang Zuong rawh,
Sanzawla fang zuong rawh, Luopui hrizawla fang zuong rawh.*
(The chants consist of invoking the paddy spirit from places the Hmars once believe to inhibit, viz., *Ni le Plain, Sinlung, Kachin, Kawlphai, Shan* and *Luopui's* paddy field).

Advocate of the Hmar-Israelite connection contends the *Ni le Phai* to be the fertile plain of the river Nile. And that the Hmar had difficulty in pronouncing it and therefore known to them as *Ni Le*.²⁹ Another contention they made in this regard is from the *Sikpui* song that contain words

which can be related to the Biblical experiences of the Israelites on their en-route to Canaan. However, preliminary result of DNA test conducted in 2003 by Isaac L. Hmar and Isaac Thangjom proved the theory to be a myth.³⁰ Attaching contemporary meaning to the past can prove to be bias, fanciful and self-serving. At the same time, it can enlighten us to other possibilities, like for instance that the Hmar could be one of the *Chilak* (non-Israelite that lives with the Israelite or the descendent of the offspring of the Israelite's intermarriage with the non-Israelite).³¹

Conclusion

For an illiterate society like the pre-colonial Hmar, Oral Tradition served as a pre-requisite form of reconstructing the past, carving out identity and an indispensable means for promoting and stimulating their cultural heritage independent of colonial influence. However, the use of it as a historical material is no doubt, apparently difficult and challenging. But, there's nothing that can be amended by careful application of critical evaluation and meticulous interdisciplinary approach. Oral Tradition, if professionally processed, harnessed and harmonized, they could be as reliable as other so called scientific sources. At any rate, a level of subjectiveness enters every step as history proper is the historian's reconstruction of the past, irrespective of the raw materials. In the words of E. H. Carr, "it is used to be said that facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them".³² In any case, the dividing line between written and oral sources are slim. Just as many of the written sources were in fact oral in origin, oral tradition, once put into writing becomes a written source. Most of what has transformed

into well-kept history of today are themselves processed from oral traditions. Moreover, no source material is used independently now a day.

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HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SECTARIANISM IN MIZO HISTORY

Lalthasanga

“Truth is of the world; it is produced there by virtue of multiple constraints.” (Foucault)

Religions are not static entities; they are always undergoing transformation as the faith is passed to each new generation. Dr J Gordon Melton, founder-director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion wrote that new religions (new religious movements, sects, alternative spiritualities and cults) were the products of the continual change, all religions were simultaneously undergoing in their effort to remain relevant to their time and place and the people they served.¹

Within Christian religion and its course of study, the Troeltschian typology², elaborated by Howard Becker developed a four-fold classification in which he divided the ‘churches’, as the communions of monotheistic religions, into Ecclesia, Denominations, Sects and Cults. Becker’s typology was further elaborated by J. Milton Yinger in

Religion Society and the Individual, where he distinguished six main types, (a) The Universal Church, (b) The Ecclesia, (c) The Denomination, (d) The Established Sect, (e) The Sect and (f) The Cult.³ Denomination (known as *Kohhran* among Mizos) is a large, organised religious institution that is not officially linked with the state or government.⁴

What is a sect?

In the sociological study of religion, a sect is defined as a relatively small religious group that has broken away from other religious organisation to renew what it considers the original visions of the faith. Sects are fundamentally at odds with society and do not seek to become established national religion. Unlike ecclesiae and denominations, they require intensive commitment and demonstrations of beliefs by members. They are often short-lived.⁵

Sects often originated in a charismatic leader and a number of them emphasis millenarianism, extreme emphasis on some aspects or doctrines of the Christian tradition at the expense of other, personal conversion as a condition of membership and condemnation of the values and institution of ordinary society.⁶ Sects represent a break with the established religious organisations within their culture but they do not make a break with the general religious tradition. They frequently revive abandoned beliefs (even Judaism for Mizos), practices or rituals or they claim to be restoring the pure teachings of the founder or the practices of his early followers.⁷

Bryan R. Wilson's sect types, with the types ranked in terms of their degree of responsiveness toward the secular

world (i.e., most withdrawn or socially-isolated to most involved) are as follows: (1) Introversionist (2) Utopian (3) Revolutionary (4) Conversionist (5) Thaumaturgical (6) Manipulationist (7) Reformist.⁸ And also Milton Yinger divides sect into three⁹ categories: a) acceptance sects, b) aggressive sects, c) avoidance sects.

Within a few decades after Christianity was initiated in Mizoram (two missionaries F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrain reached Sairang on January 11, 1894¹⁰ under The Arthington Mission followed by D.E. Jones, on August 31, 1897,¹¹ and Edwin Rowlands who arrived on December 31, 1898¹² under the Welsh Presbyterian Mission -The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission Society), the number of Christians multiplied in thousands and the Mizo people experienced revival movement in the years 1906, 1913, 1919, 1926 and 1937¹³. These revivals produced a number of charismatic-dependent groups which could be categorised under “sectarian groups”; the indigenous writers normally labelled them as “*Pawlchhuak*”¹⁴ “*Tualto*”¹⁵ and sometimes “*Kohhran*”¹⁶. After the majority of Mizos were Christianised and the traditional religion was abandoned or restructured, the community could separate Christianity into two broad categories – *Kohhran* and *Pawlchhuak* (*Tualto kohhran*). *Kohhran* simply denotes institutionalised and structured organisation based on the salvation of Jesus Christ. *Pawlchhuak* stands for locally invented belief system that hinges around a charismatic person, not connected to any international denomination.

Table 1. Growth (in number) of Christian population in Mizoram State¹⁷

Year	Population	Christian	Increase in Number	Per Cent	Rate of Growth
1901	82434	45	45	0.45	0.05
1911	91204	2461	2416	2.77	83.75
1921	98406	27720	25259	28.17	90.17
1931	124404	59123	31403	47.52	40.72
1941	152786	98108	38985	64.21	25.99
1951	196202	157575	59467	80.31	20.05
1961	266063	230509	72934	86.64	7.31
1971	332390	286141	55632	86.09	-0.64
1981	493757	413840	127699	83.91	-2.60
1991	686217	591342	177502	86.17	2.62
2001	888573	772809	181467	86.97	0.92
2011	1091014	1252311	479502	87.12	0.62

Brief review of literatures

Mizo Kohhran Hrang Hrangte Chanchin by H. LianDawla, 1986 contains sectarian and doctrinal beliefs which the author collected and compiled into book form. The author sent a range of question to the leaders of the sectarian church which cover the date of origin, founder, number of member, various doctrinal beliefs like baptism, sacrament, rapture, etc. The book, thus, compiled contains the correspondences received from the leaders of most of all denominations and sectarian groups without adding further details of the specified church and sectarian groups. The author also added that his main reason for writing the book was imparting knowledge of different sects and mutual understanding among the Mizos for further improvement in co-operation. The book provided general idea but inadequate to suffice

deeper insight. Also, most of the information in the book were outdated and obsolete.

Vanawia leh a Pawlte by VL Zaikima, 1992 specifically traces the background and origin, growth and belief system incorporated within the specified sectarian group commonly known as *Vanawia Pawl*. He mentions that these kinds of sects began to emphasise a sequencing event of “Spiritual life”, “New Testament life” and renouncing “social norms of life” thereby leading them to separate themselves from mainline denominations especially the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram and the Baptist Church of Mizoram. The author personally had an interview with Vanawia and his high councils at Thaltlang (a village at the foothills of Phawngpui Mountain in southern Mizoram). Vanawia told him how he had had a vision and trances and how he went through for the formation of a new sect which claimed that a kingdom of God (a reign of Christ for a thousand years in the book of Revelation chapter 20) written in the Bible already happened. They regarded themselves *mithianghlím* (Holy Men), *Vanmi* (People of Heaven), and *Maicham* (The Altar). They organised themselves into groups with respect to spiritual position into the *Trinity* (3 persons as in the doctrine of Trinitarian), *Thuhretu* (Witness, 2 persons as in the book of Revelation), *Thilnung* (Living Creatures, 4 persons as in the book of Revelation), *Centre Lal* (Centre Kings, 24 persons as the 24 Elders in the book of Revelation), and *Signal* (Recorder/ Writer, one person). The doctrine incorporated in their new teachings includes New Heaven and New Earth which was happening, the rapture also passed them and there should be no more Jesus to come and the

time is for *Lalzahabar* to rule, faith for salvation accomplished with faith to *Lalzahabar*, the days for Genteel is ended, etc. The entire system of organisation is based on the book of Revelation of the Holy Bible and relied mostly upon visions of Vanawia (Lalzahabara) and the word written in the arms of Siamzingi (Laldiheli). In the other books *Tlira leh a Inlarna* (2011), the first bulk portion of 608 pages covers the letters (epistle), theology (in 714 chapters), and revelation of Tlira to Thangluaii; the second bulk of 197 pages was commentaries by the author to the theology (the English version of this part was published by the same author in 2014 under the title of *Tlira's Teachings and other Indigenous Faiths in Mizoram*); and the third part contain 48 songs of the particular sect. He also wrote *Tualto Kohhran – Lalpa Kohhran Thar* (2011) which contained the history of Baktawng-based contemporary sect under the present leadership of Zionnghaka. The book dealt with Khuangtuaha, the founder and his successor in leadership, Challianchana (brother of Khuangtuaha), their doctrine, administration and their songs.

In *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin* (1993), Presbyterian Church minister, Rev. Saiaithanga gave a small treatment of sectarian groups in the last chapter of the book. He labelled them as 'the Offshoots'¹⁸ (*Pawl Penhle*), "Heretics"¹⁹ (*Kalsualte*) and stated that they arose due to unhappiness or discontent within the church, difference in the perception of the work of Holy Spirit, and a desire to take the lead within the church or groups. The author also indicated a smouldering discontent which might have established the Jehovah's Witness in Aizawl Tlangnuam in 1967.

In *Zoram Tualto Kohhran Chanchin* (1997), James Dokhuma, a prolific novelist, traced the background, growth, doctrinal beliefs and popular overview upon the practices of selected eight (8) sects within Mizoram which includes *Tlira Pawl*, *Thiangzau*, *Khuangtuaha Pawl*, *Zakaia Pawl*, *Mizo Israel Pawl*, *Zoram Maicham*, *Mithianghlim Zathangvunga*, and *Isua Krista Kohhran* (IKK). The author claimed that most of the sects germinated from the revivals that swept the region thoroughly and the dominating church organisation could not quench the spiritual needs of the time as there emerged a new form of ecstasy, visions, unknown-tongue, and patriotic feelings for the sake of Mizo community. The inadequate infusion of the word of God by local church to the lay believers and localised interpretation of Biblical language by charismatic spiritual persons create a conflict between those who received a spiritual gift and dominant churches accelerated the speed of separation. Besides the general conceptualisation of spirituality which emphasised on ecstasy and dancing while singing gospel songs may lead to undesired consequences even finding an unusual step beyond the formal practices of the dominant churches. He mentioned the adopted practice within the sects (*Pawlchhuak*) such as drinking zu, *sechhun khuangchawi*, *Puma zai*, and *Tlanglam zai*²⁰. The indigenisation of Christian doctrine to Mizo culture by procuring the traditional elements for this sect marked a distinctive feature while ‘Israelism’²¹ and its incorporation of the traditional myth, folk tales and customs of Mizo with the culture of Judaism, assuming a line of connection in history marked a different tempo. The author, thus, surveyed a historical narrative, producing a picture of inception, consequences and the reason behind the formation of selected sectarian groups.

The author's skill to exaggerate and ability to express were misleading to grasp the essence of the sects.

J. Meirion Lloyd, one of the missionaries in Mizoram wrote *History of the Church in Mizoram* (1991) that underlies a small evidence of the sectarian group under 'charismatic leaders of considerable activity'. The book states that these sectarian groups 'differed in outlook, aims and beliefs, but in all of them there was a certain resentment of what they saw as the monolithic Presbyterian control of the churches. They (the sectarian groups) valued the Gospel, but chafed much at the Church's rules and regulations'²². The statement goes on by portraying the leaders of these sectarian groups as possessing 'experience wider than the average through contacts with other parts of India (were) fired by the prospects of obtaining more funds and better facilities through the advent of another mission into Mizoram'²³. The author opines that these leaders of the sectarian groups were taking advantage of the Gospel for the material abundance of their lives which compels verification under proper channel. Also mentioned were the names of the sectarian groups- Kawlkhuma who fought for the establishment of the Salvation Army. On the side of the desire to reduce the influence of Presbyterian Church domination regarding the rules and regulation sits Tlira who 'propagated a number of strange ideas which apparently came to him in a series of dreams and vision. Arguing that all days belonged to God, he advocated the abolition of Sunday. He taught too that one need not to worry about their sins, for what is done in the body and by the body cannot affect the Christian's soul'²⁴. The author perceived the so-propagated message but failed to mention the deep wound inflicted to

the adherents of the church. The difficulty faced at the initiation of new mission ground within Lushai territory increased the effort to look out for another possibility on the side of dissenters was not mentioned though the author stated that 'other missions were not allowed by Government to enter'²⁵. The author also made a statement not recognizing the existence of these sectarian groups who expressed 'Sabbatarianism', 'license to sex'²⁶ in the late forties, indicating only the Presbyterian and the Baptist churches as 'denomination'²⁷.

In *Revivals – The Mizo Ways* (1994), Lalsawma, a Presbyterian Church minister, typically pointed out the consequences of Mizo revivals²⁸ giving a separate chapter for the same. The earliest 'Deviations', the author mentioned, was Khawliantlira in 1913, forming a 'band' of followers and wrote three book²⁹ containing his visions and teachings. Small tinge of allege was perceptible in the writings that revival and the 'urgency of the Kingdom of God', the 'impending end' captured the minds of these 'deviations' or bands of new path causing them to erect a separate platform. The second wave of Revival (1913) did not show signs of resentment possibly turning adherent to create new path. The third wave of Revival (1919) brought forth *Hlim Sang, Mihlim*³⁰, prophetic announcement, apocalyptic visions, direct rapport with the Father and falling into the state of trances³¹; the essence of physically observable character of the sectarian groups which the author did not mention their emergence and existence within the church. Charismatic leaders and their spiritual companion, their intimate relationships, for spiritual nourishment but conceived of carnal conjunction and 'son

of the Holy Ghost' (*Thlarau Thianghlim Fa*) began to appear in the Fourth wave of Revival (1929/1930). "*Emerging theology of Libertinism*", the seventh chapter of the book deals with the movement brought about by charismatic people. The Libertine movement, though revival-oriented, sanctions separate path disregarding the church rules and regulations, freedom of relationship between opposite sex which was excommunicated in the church, perceiving church leaders as spiritually inadequate, and the church being sapped, dried out and lack of power. Zakaia of Aiduzawl, Sangbera of Ngopa, Khuangtuaha of Sialsuk/Hmawngkawn, and *Thiangzau*³² were briefly highlighted to the readers who were starting a libertine movement and misused the spiritual gift of healing and oratory. Lalnghenga of Chaltlang (Aizawl), Siamliana of Vandawt (now Zanlawn village, Kolasib district), and Rualkhuma of Kelkang (Champhai district) were also pointed out as trying to set up new 'denomination'. The author also did not fail to mention the misapprehension of the Superintendent of the land, McCall arresting and demoting the persons involved in the Kelkang revival. As the book's intention is not to have a deep enquiry into the so-called sectarian groups, then the history of organizational structure of the sectarian groups provided is equally vague and thin. The author put forwarded them as 'deviations', 'bands', 'libertine', and 'cults', and not categorized them as 'sects' or 'indigenised churches'.

Christianity and Mizo Culture by Mangkhosat Kipgen (1996), briefly discussed indigenous sects. He stated that the founders of the indigenised sects had serious mistakes which were (1) the confusion of Christian love with erotic love that led them to become involved in morally

questionable activities, (2) the attitude of spiritual arrogance that disturbed their relationship with other by claiming to have direct access to the mind of God, (3) they claimed that they no longer needed the guidance of either the Bible or Christian tradition, nor the ministration of the sacraments deprived them of valuable spiritual resources that would have given the balance to their position, and (4) while they were right in saying that 'God did not condemn any culture, but accepted praise and worship of people in and through their culture,' they were not discriminating in accepting all elements of the traditional *Zo* culture; hence, they did not make an assessment of those elements which contributed to Christian values and which did not. He also pointed out the distinctive feature of Mizo Israelism; 'the weakness of this movement lies in the fact that it is based on historical assumptions about the origins and history of both the Israelites and the *Zos* that have no basis in scientific study. They simply refer to what they imagined to be similarities between the *Zos* and the Israelites, similarities based upon 'revelation' rather than any real historical developments.'³³ The author's summarizing statement concluded due to the extreme indigenisation of the groups like *Tlira Pawl*, *Khuangtuaha Pawl* and *Zakaia Pawl*, the main churches were able to reach a balance, though indigenous, form of Christianity based upon reasoned preaching and education. It was this that gave, and gives the *Zo* church its strength.³⁴ This generalisation confirms the popular notion in existing literature of sectarian belief systems as undesired accidental occurrence inside the realm of Mizo revivals.

A.G. McCall in his *Lushai Chrysalis* (2003), from an outsider's viewpoint, gives a slight mention of the effects

of the Revival by remarking the uncontrolled-demoniac dancing³⁵, senseless uttering³⁶, spiritual strip-tease³⁷, and fast approaching end of the world³⁸ as the prominent features visible in the characteristic of Mizo indigenous sectarian groups. In addition to this, the author vividly states in a derogative sense by asserting that the Mizo contended with ‘inferiority complex’³⁹ and lose traditional dances. They were also not capable of containing knowledge and spirituality. The analytical study of the book posed a meagre intelligence, that of incomplete understanding for the sake of Mizo sectarian groups. Their conduct and amalgamation of various theologies did not hamper the administration of the State machinery; but seek available option to break psychological constraints and discomforts.

Vanlalchhuanawma, a Mizo theologian in *Christianity and Subaltern Culture* (2006) regards the indigenisation of Christianity through charismatic revivalist in Mizoram as a power conflict which took the form of religious zeal in contracting consent from the enthusiastic ignorant. ‘The unauthorised activities’ help the emergence of natural leaders like Tlira and Kawlkhuma yet asserting that the arrival of new movement is illustration of ‘persisting tension between the revival movement and the church.’⁴⁰ The author mention of ‘the indigenous autonomous movement’ to represent the whole movement were Lalnghenga, Siamliana, Zakamlova, *Thiangzau*, and Khuangtuaha Pawl; and the inclination to autonomous church was somehow linked with the stringent imposition of Governmental disciplinary rules forbidding the practise of glossolalia (*Tawnghriatloh*), *Lengkhawm* and *Mualinkhawm*⁴¹ and the three reasons which led the ‘unofficial leaders’ to part with established church included

rivalry of leadership, reaction against the Assembly's resolution, and material self-interest.⁴² Though it was inevitable to mention the movement of indigenised autonomous churches in studying the churches history in Mizoram, the lack of focus in their history and social adaptation, and the structure perceptible in these sectarian groups leave a considerable space.

In the book *India, Burma leh Bangladesh-a Mizo Kohhrante* (2007), B. Lalthangliana, a Mizo historian, traces the historical background and growth of Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, Evangelical Church of Maraland, the Salvation Army, Roman Catholic, United Pentecostal Church, Seventh Day Adventist, and Lairam Baptist Church in India; Baptist church, Anglican, Khu-mi Mission, Roman Catholic, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, and Independent Church of Burma in Burma (Myanmar); Baptist Church, North East India General Mission, and Presbyterian Church in Manipur; Presbyterian Church and Baptist Church in Chittagong and Tripura; and, a chapter that investigated how Christianity reach Mizoram, beginning of the alphabet, Bible translation, the Revivals, insurgency and the Churches and disagreement between Presbyterian and Baptist Church. The 425 pages of this book showed a political problem that prevent the establishment of new missionary ground under Salvation Army, Assembly of God, Seventh Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, and United Pentecostal Church. The British imperialistic policies advocated the existence of least possible Mission ground for a single political territory. In addition to this, the dissatisfaction upon the dominant Churches compelling the dissenters to form new Church was mentioned. Another

factor visible in the book in the creation of new Church was territorial politics arising from ethnic identity (the formation of Lairam Baptist Church). The author concentrates on the political point of view to the birth of new sects in Mizoram which is unfortunately not enough for the investigate the background of their origin; however, he gives direction regarding the source for information of the study.

An Zirtirnate leh an Chanchin (2010) by Vanlalchhuanga, a local writer, focuses on the teachings and history of sectarian groups and minor fellowships inside Christianity in Mizoram. The chapters cover a range of preventive measures from the so-called sectarian belief system and their conduct; the life history and narrative events of the charismatic leaders; the twist of the Holy bible and its meanings (hermeneutics) for the temporal and disgraceful pleasure which the other-side of the people accepted as morally acceptable etc. The author succinctly clarify 'The Beast' (*Sakawlh*), its essence, power, how it would appear, etc. which was the teachings that preponderate its fearfulness and troubling the minds; various interpretation provided by Mizo Theologians upon *Sakawlh*; Millenarian teachings; the various revivals that swept the region and its features for general information; Khawliantlira and his teachings; Khuangtuaha's teachings and subsequent history; Zathangvunga and his teachings; Vanawia's teachings and his works; Rorelliana and his teachings; Lalbiaklana and his teachings; Lalzawna and his teachings; Chhunkhama and his teachings; Lalbiakmawia and his teachings; Lalrempuia (Enoka) and his teachings; Rohminglana and his teachings; various covenanted-sectarian (*Thuthlung*) groups – *Mizo Israel*,

Zoram Maicham, *Thiangzau*, and the last topic deals with *False Prophets* and the awareness needed for the overcoming of these teachings. The book tries to testify a statement that Presbyterian Church belongs to the true Ultimate God and all the spiritual revival and renovation happened within its domain; people who forfeit its authority and left the Church only faced heretical teachings. The author also gives a historical analysis of the event and the subsequent creation of platforms for new ideas or theology. The book ultimately presents a one-sided propaganda that many (particularly for those members of the sect) will consider misleading and deceptive.

The partiality of the authors is noted. The generalisation of the history of the sects asserts the notion of reinforcing the dominant faith and its continuing structures through the control of 'languages' and verdicts. Thus, the force of negation to reduce the retention of possible threats has had been spontaneously accelerated by means of providing the pervasiveness and credibility of institutionalised faith. The public awareness was directed to the validity of the church and the challenge to change the nature of existing theologies were side-tracked to the dark corner of public memory through control of literature (and its contents – the medium of social interactions). Here, magazines like *Kristian Tlangau*, *Meichher*, *MUP Tlangau*, *YMA Chanchinbu*, etc are intentionally left out along with archival materials and personal diaries.

Problems of sectarian history

The eschatological teachings which contrasted the dominant church in Mizo Christianity started with the

vision of Khawliantlira in 1913 (the second revival period). He claimed that the church institution was a serpent only to swallow all the adherents inside her. He called for the separation of the believers from the impending end. The doctrinal basis claimed that Jesus had already come to the world and the present day belonged to the New kingdom of a thousand year. One should not expect for rapture as the Spirit did finish doing it unknowingly. There should be no resurrection; the acceptance of Jesus in a person's life is a resurrected life. All the words written in the Bible is an allegory; the death and crucifixion of Jesus had had been totally delusive and wrong. There was no sin, sacred and profane in human life, one did not need to observe Sunday, Eucharist, and baptism.⁴³ This notion of eschatology did not vanish; though the physically observable group (*Tlira Pawl*) dissipated into society, the new teachings and doctrinal basis was rather resurfaced in the character of the latter sectarian groups in Mizoram.

After the arrival of Christianity in Mizoram in 1894, the course of history turned from oral transmission to written form through the introduction of alphabet. This transformation was seen in the writings of Mizo history in a mode of different knowledge producing disturbing conclusions from different authors at different times. In studying the history of Mizos, students as well as scholars were cornered into a state of confusion (due to multiple interpretation) about facts and figures, places and events especially to the pre-colonial times. Interests linked often into certain group of people, and vindictive narrations often were directed to certain section of the people. In the case of sect group in Mizoram, the history which could be gathered

from few authors inclined more to the support of dominant section of the society. Hence, objective representation rarely found its place.

The diversity found in history of Christianity itself was deeply-rooted each in its theology and dogmas, rituals and forms of worship. As Protestant ideology was the main source of Divine knowledge in the early years of the twentieth century of Mizoram, other strands of Christianity find herself uncomfortable in due course. This kind of repression was found first from the ring of church leaders which eventually dispersed in a most distorted form and penned down to book form after it had been labelled 'unsafe'.

In 1913, J.H. Lorrain wrote, "We are not here to make them Eastern duplicates of Western Baptists, but to bring them to Christ and so guide them that they shall develop along their own national lines into a strong Lushai Church of God which shall be a living witness of the power of Gospel to change savages into saints and head-hunter into soul-hunters. We look forward to the time when the Lushai Church shall be a happy blend of all that is best in Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist, with something added perhaps which no Western Denomination can supply".⁴⁴ From his endeavour to the ultimate version possible for Christian in Mizoram, there is no doctrinal conflict, power struggling-platform and discharging segregative tones. But there arose a number of differences with the increase in scriptural knowledge, and personal interpretation of the Holy Words. These gradual inclinations to distrust and self-judgement dragged the common line of theology apart and diversity set in after the Revival of 1906. During this period, there were

few literatures in respect of Christian theology, yet were potent enough to cause certain group of believers to set themselves apart from the dominant group. One has to keep in mind that faith could go in any direction as long as the one claims himself to the side of absolute truth.

In the second revival of 1913, the Christians were expressing the second coming of Jesus Christ to be arriving soon. This millenarian view (the last Judgement) of Christian life increase the urge of spreading the gospel among the native non-believers and thus, it greatly enhanced the number of converts. In the Third Revival of 1919, the emphasis goes to the sufferings of Jesus Christ and his precious redemption through the Cross. *Khuang* (traditional drum) was now accepted for the instrument of praise and worship service in the Church. Christianity among the Mizos had been increasingly accepted as the truest belief and many Mizo hymn composers aligned Christian theology with the cultural belief system which effectively stabilised the foundation of Christianity within the Mizo mindset. In the Fourth Revival of 1935, the working of the Holy Spirit was the main theme. Dancing in the Church began to be the acknowledgement of the measure of spirituality, prophetic acts and visionaries were exalted to the pivotal signs of betterment. *Mi Hlim*, *Hlim Rui*, *Hlimsang*, *Thlarau Mi*, and *Khurbing* were the intense spirituality acquiring stages of ecstasy starting from sober dancing to unconscious dancing and even to constant attachment to opposite sex in the name of divine love. In the Fifth Revival (1959-60), the 'born again theology'⁴⁵ was known to the Mizo Christian as a whole. Another revival in the 1980s brought another theme where patriotic zeal was intertwined to the sectarian

faiths. During the period starting from 1894 to 1966 (72 years), there were 15 sects recorded, within the period of MNF insurgency (1966-1986, 20 years) there were 20 sects listed from the available authors, and during 1986- 1996 there were 4 sect group. The case of their (the sects) continuity as well as discontinuity, with respect of their authenticity from the available lists (of the names of sectarian groups) was diminishing with the escalation of power and knowledge by the dominant churches via media and literatures.

One has to focus on the values, doctrinal structure, intensity of the sects themselves and their internal structure, symbolism and pervasiveness⁴⁶ as important critical variables. But the available analysis and evaluations rarely probe into the critical assessments. The historical background and its social settings which eventually forced a group of people out from the mainstream were more or less one-sided. In the meantime, one has to remember that the available collections of printed literature were produced from non-secular side (where personal memories were reflected in bulk). James Scott in his *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) wrote how the powerful and the powerless are constrained in their behaviour within the power relation; he suggests that what one need to add to the analysis of the behaviour of the powerless and powerful in each other's presence is an analysis of their behaviour when they are with their equals. In order to analyse a power relation, one must analyse the total relation of power, the hidden transcripts as well as the public performances.⁴⁷ Sects are to be classified according to the kinds of "response to the world" – which differed according to their intellect, economic status, and spirituality and other reasons. The classification system

should facilitate the investigation of similarities and differences between and within sect classes; it should be able to make relatively fine discriminations between sects of the same and different types, both theoretically and empirically. The knowledge pertaining to the sects in Mizoram were based mostly from secondary sources or information, thus the narrations had a fair chance to become biased which had been witnessed from personal interrogation. 'Truth is constructed and kept in place through a wide range of strategies which support and affirm it and which exclude and counter alternative versions of events.'⁴⁸

Any form of knowledge which is not in agreement with that of society creates tension which can be removed by either leaving society or accepting its system of knowledge. The different mechanism and techniques applied from the dominant churches to curb the 'discords' through the 'discourse'⁴⁹ almost shadowed the 'reality' of the sects. The church institution, from which the sects sprang out, almost denied the existence, partially hid the truth, and excluded from their propaganda as the sects had been rendered as negligible and not important for the major domain which they controlled with a 'structured' information and knowledge. For this reason, the sect cannot be understood outside of the social context in which it is found. There must be a clear statement of the source of knowledge in the sect and the social level to which it refers.⁵⁰ In order 'to survive, it (the sect) has to create formalized rules and procedures, since it can no longer depend on the central role of the leader in organizing the followers';⁵¹ but the social recognition as a 'significant' group had had been minimised through the control of knowledge in the medium of

knowledge disbursements by the 'dominant' group i.e. the domination of the general public interests was harnessed to the maximum possible denial.

The voices of the lower deck in a moving ship of the sea was transmitted through a channel of 'repression' provided by printed medium where the literatures were volitionally reduced to 'harmful', 'unsafe', and 'untrue'⁵². The intention to suppress the real history of the sects could not be vindicated but the reproduction of incomplete message proved the potential of the sectarian history to generate unprecedented growth in number and subscription to the unsatisfied adherents from the side of the 'powerful', and a sense of 'claim' in acquiring the 'absolute truth' as it was denied by the masses in the living days of Jesus Christ and the Apostles from the side of the 'powerless'.

The colonial structure of knowledge was preserved, solidified, reiterated and maintained through the protection of 'claimed-originality' and the potential supports for necessary confirmation was garnered by means of internalising generated 'truth' to the audiences. The nationalistic messages of the sectarian history had been distorted and reformulated in the shape of 'blinding agenda' leaving the passive receiver to remain confined to the comfort zone. The bold attempt to critically retouching the stage of misunderstanding between the sects and the church received indirect intervention which could be read as the influence of 'power', 'knowledge' and 'truth' of the 'giants'. In the meantime, the meagre literature form the sectarian side proved the failure of containment. The voice of the strangled was low and the silence of the meek was

interpreted to disillusionment; the trail was thin and the trait was traded to justify the 'blessed'. Therefore, the histories of sects were most of the time sidelined to 'unnecessary information' for the public. The institutionally trained personnel strictly controlling the interpretation of Bible arising from untrained enthusiasts was by far the revelation of prohibition of access to the functional group. In the analysis, therefore, one could formulate the existence of repression by the dominant group in most of all the conveniences. The history the 'denied' group was suppressed in the discourse. In fact, one could not deny the importance, hard work, and enthusiasm of the incomplete collections (of books) of sectarian history writer, in preserving the true 'faith' for the general people and their works help in promoting the present day 'church institution'. However, the process of 'indoctrinated' knowledge system clearly impaired the objectivity and reliability of the available authors.

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- ¹ Christopher Partridge (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of New Religions*, Lion Publishing, Oxford, Printed at Singapore, 2004, p.11
- ² Church-sect typology: The attempt to classify religious groups according to their typical relationship with society. First developed by Troeltsch, the distinction has been influential in the sociology of religion. Together with other established churches of the nation-states of his time, Troeltsch saw the Evangelical Church in Germany as exemplifying those religious group which accept and affirm establish social order: The Church 'utilizes the state and the ruling class, and weaves these elements into her own life, she then becomes an integral part of the existing order. Sects, on the other hand, are protest groups...rather than working to advance overall social cohesion and order. (John Bowker (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, p.223-224)

- ³ Geoffrey K. Nelson, "The Concept of Cult", in *The Sociological Review*, Volume 16, Issue 3, pages 351–362, November 1968, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>, accessed on 29/3/2013.
- ⁴ Richard T. Schaefer, *Sociology – A brief Introduction*, 6th Edition, The McGraw Hill Co., New York, 2004, p.339.
- ⁵ Nuri Týnaz, "A Social Analysis of Religious Organisations: The Cases of Church, Sect, Denomination, Cult and New Religious Movements (NRMs) and Their Typologies", in *Ýslâm Araþtýrmalary Dergisi*.
- ⁶ John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, 2nd Edition, Penguin Books, London, 1997, p.457.
- ⁷ Geoffrey K. Nelson, op.cit.
- ⁸ Michael R. Welch, "Analyzing Religious Sects: An Empirical Examination of Wilson's Sect Typology" in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.
- ⁹ *Acceptance sects* are individualistic groups and often consist of members from the middle-class. Their concern is rather more with personal than societal failure. *Aggressive sects*, one of the less-used notions of Troeltsch that Yinger adopts, are the religious communities of the lower-classes that are mostly associated with poverty and powerlessness. Society is viewed as intrinsically evil and in need of reform. The teachings of Jesus, for instance, can be interpreted in radical-ethical terms. *Avoidance sects* display a common form of sectarian reaction and put emphasis on a new life in the hereafter. But their protests are symbolic and they do not risk similar defeats as do aggressive sects. Their outlook reflects the pessimism of despair. Geoffrey K. Nelson, op.cit.
- ¹⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity and Subaltern Culture*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2006, p.99
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, p.117
- ¹² *Ibid*, p.119
- ¹³ Revival – a period of renewed religious faith and spirituality
- ¹⁴ *Pawl* – group or party, *Chhuak* – leave/depart ; Dissenters or Secluded group
- ¹⁵ Indigenous or locally originated group
- ¹⁶ Denomination (Mizo context of *kohhran* is denomination)
- ¹⁷ Sources: C Zairemethanga & C Zorema, *Mizoram Baptist Kohhran Thalai Pawl*, Communication Dept., Baptist Church of Mizoram, Serkawn, 2000; Lalmachhuana Zofa, *Mizoram General Knowledge*, Fourth Edition, Technosys Offset, Aizawl, 2008; Mammem Mathew, (ed.), *Manorama Yearbook 2013*, Malayala Manorama Press, Kottayam, 2012; <http://zolengthe.net/2011/12/18/mizoram-religious-statistics> accessed on 02/03/2013 09:45PM

- ¹⁸ Rendered into English by me.
- ¹⁹ Rev. Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin*, 3rd Edition, Synod Press, Aizawl, 1993, pp.56,57
- ²⁰ Zu is a local drink, fermented rice beer; *Sechhun Khuangchawi* is a culminating step in Mizo traditional belief system that necessitates ritualistic killing of Mithun, incantations and consumption of Zu; *Puma Zai* and *Tlanglam Zai* is a genre of Mizo sentimental folk song which was sung in accompaniment of Zu.
- ²¹ *Israelism* here will denote the aspiration to become political citizen of Israel.
- ²² J. Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, 1991, p.175
- ²³ *Ibid*, p. 175
- ²⁴ J. Meirion Lloyd, *op cit.*, p.176
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, p.200
- ²⁶ *Ibid*, p.311
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, p.310
- ²⁸ Revival – a period of renewed religious faith and spirituality
- ²⁹ Name of TLiras books are *The Capture of the Chief Dragon* (Sakawlh Lal Manna) , *Book of the New Heaven* (Van Thar Bu) and *The left-hand city of the Goat* (Veilam Kel Khaw Runtu).
- ³⁰ *Hlim Sang* (High Revivalist) and *Mihlim* (Merry person); a term denoting a state of mind filled with spiritual happiness and uncontrolled ecstatic dancers.
- ³¹ Lalsawma, *Revival – The Mizo Way*, A Gospel Centenary Souvenir, Printwell Offset, Calcutta, 1994, p.144.
- ³² Literal meaning is accepting and having freedom to do everything even sexual intercourse; antinomian – a view that Christians do not have to observe moral law.
- ³³ Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, Mizo Theological Conference, Jorhat, Assam, 1996, p. 310.
- ³⁴ Mangkhosat Kipgen, *op cit.*, p. 312
- ³⁵ AG McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, Reprinted, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 2003, p.222.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, p.220.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, p.221.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.219.
- ⁴⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma, *op cit.*, p. 217.

- ⁴¹ *Lengkhawm* – indoor assembly to a particular place and time especially singing religious songs; *Mualinkhawm* – an outdoor assembly for discussion, propagation, praise and worship, etc organised by certain church or group
- ⁴² Vanlalchhuanawma, *op cit.*, p.424.
- ⁴³ Vanlalchhuanga, *An Zirtimate leh an Chanchin*, Fourth Edition, Gosen Home, Aizawl, 2010, pp. 34-36.
- ⁴⁴ C.L. Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, Published by The Literature Committee , BCM, Lunglei, Printed at GLS Press, Bombay, 1987, p.100.
- ⁴⁵ *The Holy Bible*, John 3:1-21 (Jesus told Nicodemus to be born again). Lalruali wrote that this theology was known to Hmarchhak Presbytery after the Third revival (in 1924, NE Khawdungsei Church witnessed the beginning of ‘born again theology’). Lalruali, *Zoram Hmarchhak Harhna Chanchin*, Published by Synod Literature and Publication Board, Printed at Synod Press, 1997, p. 38.
- ⁴⁶ John B. Snook, “An Alternative to Church-Sect” in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.
- ⁴⁷ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, Routledge, New York, First Indian Reprint (Bhavish Graphics), 2015, p.41.
- ⁴⁸ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, Routledge, New York, First Indian Reprint (Bhavish Graphics), 2015, p.76.
- ⁴⁹ “A discourse is a regulated set of statements which combine with others in predictable ways. It is regulated by a set of rules which lead to the distribution and circulation of certain utterance and statements.it is associated with relation of power.” “...discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.” Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, Routledge, New York, First Indian Reprint (Bhavish Graphics), 2015, p.54-55.
- ⁵⁰ Russell Heddendorf, ‘*The Sect and Religious Autonomy*’ in *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1965), pp. 45-58.
- ⁵¹ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, Sixth Edition, Polity Press, UK, 2009, p.690.
- ⁵² The internalisation of truth contains the exchange of power and authority, those who possess authority (though inwardly given) always seemed to speak the truth while those without power were ascribed to say ‘possible lies’. Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, Routledge, New York, First Indian Reprint (Bhavish Graphics), 2015, p.58.

A CRITIQUE ON THE HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION OF MIZO BY LALHNAM SAKHUA

Rohmingmawii

Introduction

Almost all Mizo in Mizoram in the Northeast India became Christians in half a century since Christianity was preached to them. For a century since Christianity was introduced in Mizoram in 1894, the Mizo Christians remained faithful to their religious belief. Though there were schisms within Christianity, the various sects that emerged have derived their authority from the holy book of the Christians, the Holy Bible. However, in the recent past, some people who were formerly Christians, began to claim that they no longer embrace Christianity but follow the Mizo traditional religion which they call 'Zo Sakhua/Zohnam Sakhua'.

The digression from Christianity often resulted into revival of the 'old' or 'traditional' religion among different colonised tribes, and the neighbouring states of Mizoram have also experienced it for a long time. The propellant and process of revival of traditional religion is, however, not always the same, though the common cause is the feeling

of cultural assimilation by 'alien' western culture as a result of Christianity and colonial rule. It could be part of a struggle for search of identity, or even an assertion of identity for a particular social group. It is true that Christianity was introduced in most part of the colonised states under the patronage of colonial rule. The colonial rulers in the political front and the missionaries in the religious front seem to sync well at least to the eye of the colonised people though it may not be so in reality. Nevertheless, the dichotomy of colonialism and Christianity is often considered to have great impact on the cultural life of the colonised people which have been reacted to at various capacities in different space and time. As cultural revivalism often represents assertion of one's identity, it is not unusual to experience the movement of cultural revivalism along with independence movement as in the Indian freedom movement.

In the case of Mizoram, Christian missionaries arrived in the land after colonial rule was established. At the beginning, the colonial government provided protection and patronage to the Christian missionaries; on the other hand, the missionaries also operated from the colonial mind set as they were moulded by the mentality of the age. As a result, the Christianity introduced was wrapped by western culture, and it came into conflict with many Mizo cultural practices. Thus, there was a cultural battle from the initial stage, but western Christianity seemed to gain upper hand for some time as it was supported by the ruling groups, and many Mizo cultural practices were condemned as heathen practices and thrown away from the early church. However, as Christianity progressed and the Mizos experienced repeated revival movement within Christianity, many Mizo

cultural practices were reclaimed for Christianity, and drums, dance and tunes of songs condemned earlier were introduced to the practice of Christianity and thereby 'indigenised' Christianity to a large extent. This process began since the early colonial period and still going on till today. Yet, some people continue to accuse Christianity as a disruption in the fabric of Mizo culture.

Apart from this, there were relational and doctrinal problems arising from the church administration, especially from the institutionalised churches that gave rise to conflict of ideas among the believers which sometimes resulted into emergence of sectarian groups. One of such sectarian groups was Nunna Lalchhungkua which later on transformed themselves into a religious group, called Nunna Lalhnam/Zo Sakhua that forfeit any tie with Christianity and the church.

Nunna Lalhnam and Zo Sakhua

The followers of Zo Sakhua were formerly known as 'Lal Chhungkua' or 'Rorelliana Pawl' which was founded by Rorelliana. Rorelliana was one of the most popular Evangelists of the Presbyterian Church around 1976. He began to depart from his main affiliation from the early 1980s, and founded Lal Chhungkua in 1985, which was later changed to 'Nunna Lalchhungkua' in 1986.¹ The celebration of Nunna Kutpui (Festival of Life) at Champhai in 1988 was the early manifestation of his departure from Christianity where attempt was made to revive the old Mizo cultural tradition through dance and songs, and 'a bell was rung for the defeat of Christians' (Kristian tlawmna dar).² At the earlier stage, they were working together with other sectarian

groups which broke away from the established church but later on, they worked separately.

From its establishment till today, what characterize Nunna Lalhnam is its emphasis on Mizo cultural tradition and its stand against Christianity. They have openly declared Christianity as 'foreign faith' and denied the authority of the Bible. They pronounced themselves to be worshippers of Khuavang, a Mizo God in the earlier period. Against the absence of concept of monotheistic God in the earlier period, this group singled out Khuavang as their object of worship, and they claimed heritage for it. They tried to revive the traditional religion but only to a limited extent while they borrowed or invented many new practices which are incorporated into their religion that, in a way, defy their claim of heritage. For example, though they designate some of their senior members as 'Puithiam' (priests), they do not have Sadawt and Bawlpu like in the olden days, nor these priests perform any kind of sacrifices which was the main function of the earlier priests. The earlier Mizo did not observe Sundays while this group observe Sunday and even have a Sunday school like the Christians, etc.

In order to authenticate and propagate the principles of their belief and practices, Nunna Lalhnam has produced many written works, much of which deals with Mizo history and culture. Since it is from Mizo history and culture that they derive legitimacy for their religious belief, these texts formed the foundation of this group though the historical validity of these works is obviously a less important issue in this case.

Texts of Zo Sakhua

There are many books and booklets written by Rorelliana³, the founder and his followers, some of which are published by Nunna Lalhnam Literature Board and few are published by Heritage Foundation, Guwahati. The members of this group have played an active role in translation of the Hindu religious book, the Bhagavat Gita, a publication of Heritage Foundation where the Lalhnam Puithiam (priests) have introduced the book and mentioned the relevance of the Hindu holy book for those who follow Khuavang with which the Lalhnam addressed their god.⁴ Some of the published books are meant for children and adult members as Sunday School lessons while other works like Lalchangliana's '*Zofate Dinchhuahna Kawngpui*' (2014), '*Khuavang Kalna Zo Nun*' by Marama Khawlhing (2016) and many booklets of Rorelliana are for public consumption. A very special book is '*Nunna Thu*' (Book of Life), a hard bound with black cover which resembles the book of a New Testament of the Christians in its appearance. It contains the words of Puithiamte (Priests) and Lalpasalthate (literally, it means warriors; a designation given to some people in the group) which have been collected since 1990 and compiled by the youth group (Lalhnam Vohbik Ṭhalai) as their religious guidebook.⁵

These texts try to offer the understanding of the concept of sakhua (religion) in which they try to negate the boundary between religious sphere and secular sphere. They accept religion as a way of life and try to find one's national identity (hnam) in his religion (sakhua). As they throw lights on *sakhua* and its concept, they try to derive the authority from the practices of the ancestors and propounded, as if

there was an organised and institutionalised religion among the Mizos in ancient times, that the ancestors were confident in their sakhua as they were sure that God has created them as a nation, and it was their religion which creates the nation.⁶ Rorelliana says that being a Mizo is identical with being in Mizo sakhua (“Mizo I nih khan Mizo sakhuaah chuan I awm sa reng tawh a”).⁷

Since they build a close attachment between the national identity and religion, they argue that accepting religion other than Zo Sakhua is betrayal of one’s nation.⁸ This concept of religion as a way of life, representing one’s national identity is novel at least among the Mizos that must have been derived from a monistic worldview which is one of the principles of many eastern philosophical tradition. In order to establish this idea, the Lalhnam writers began to trace Mizo history and culture, the content of much of their works are made up of this subject.

Mizo history in Lalhnam texts

There is no doubt that much effort has been given to study Mizo history by the writers of Lalhnam. Their works contained detail explanation of different Mizo historical episodes and cultural practices. However, as they started their work from a particular point, their works also head for a particular end that creates many technical problems.

In order to prove that the Mizo nation is prominent and had existed for a long time, the Zo Sakhaw texts have brought together evidences which are largely unknown to the larger academics. In the Sunday School lesson, it is argued that Mizo nation have existed even before Christ

and the text presents an archaeological evidence of a grave of the supposed Zo rich man in China that belonged to BC 770 which they claimed to retrieve from Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1981. It also says that the Kom of Zo tribe has their history written that belong to BC 8000; a song composed by Sobuia in BC 2000 have also been mentioned in the same text.⁹ Col. V. Lunghnema is quoted while tracing the Mizo settlement in Yunan Province and the boundaries of Shan State like Lungleng, Lungtion and Thakthing village in around BC 5000-2000, about 1000 years before the birth of Christ.¹⁰ Rorelliana presented in his booklet about the remains of a 6 months old child in a clay pot found in Siberia (Russia) with a seemingly unreserved acceptance and said that it was dated to belong to BC 114989 (120 thousand years ago), since it is the Mizo tradition to bury a child (hlamzuih) in a clay pot, it could have been the trace of the Mizo forefathers who have existed as old as that date. In the Sunday School textbook, this story was however, presented as a fanciful imagination.¹¹ Yet, this was taken as a proof of the long existence of Zofate. Taking this evidence, V. L. Ngaihshawia even claimed that the Mizos have existed 116,000 years earlier to Adam of the Bible, and thereby claimed evasion from the fall of Eden.¹²

In order to uphold the preeminence of the Zo hnam, they propose that some names have been taken after what the Mizo called them; for instance, Chittagong got its name from the Mizo name 'Satikang' because the Mizo burnt (kang) a flesh (sa ti) there; the river Irrawady had its name when the Mizo called it 'Airawhdung' because they have burnt (kang) a crab (chakai) there.¹³

It is a generally accepted view that the ultimate goal of the traditional Mizo religion is Pialral, the Mizo conception of heaven. The Mizo ancestors have lived their life trying to attain access to Pialral which could be earned through performing Thangchhuah by fulfilling a ceremonial feast. They also believed that the common people will settle at Mithi Khua. However, the Lalhnam followers believe that there is no mithi khua. Pialral was referred as the abode of Chung Pathian, Pu Vana. While discussing the traditional understanding of Pialral, they suggest that only the soul of man and not animals or others entered Pialral in spite of citing the belief that the souls of the animals escorted the Thangchhuahpa to Pialral. This interpretation was made to prove their point that only the soul of man entered Pialral, not as an individual soul but in its union with Khawzing Pathian as it is the source of all souls.¹⁴

Only few instances are mentioned here. No one could deny the fact that the scholars of Lalhnam have worked hard to recollect the history and culture of the Mizo, and some of their works provide in detail the historical and cultural traditions of the Mizo. The problem lies with the fact that these historical texts lack objectivity and fall in the trap of romanticization with no proper methodology or conceptual framework. In fact, history has been manipulated to prove their point, and in the process, the historical validity of their interpretation is not given much regard.

It seems that while writing history or proposing their opinion, these writers seem to care less about the sources. Thus, one of the most significant problems in the historical works of the Lalhnam is with the sources. There are sporadic references of names like Rev. Zairema, B. Lalthangliana, K.

Pachhunga, Col. V. Lunghnema, etc. As a whole, these texts rarely give references to the sources they used, and even those mentioned are limited to local works. Further, they care less about the authenticity of the sources. It seems that the sources have been accepted uncritically; for example, the work of Col. V. Lunghnema which periodize Mizo history to the period before Christ is accepted without question though he himself is found wanting of more evidences to validate his argument. These shortcomings are found in their attempt to disprove the Bible and the relevance of teachings of Christianity to the Mizos.

Also, a serious problem is the presentation of factual error as well as arbitrary periodization. For example, 'Chhinlunga' is presented as the creator God and the eternal rock ("siamtu Chatuan lungpui 'CHHINLUNGA' Pa Pathian Chungkhuanu...").¹⁵ There is no consensus among historians of the existence of Chhinlung as a person or as a place, or if it is only a myth. Yet, Lalhnam thinkers has already taken their side in the absence of any proof. Again, they dated Mizo history as early as BC 1,20,000 while there is no evidence to support their claim either in oral tradition or archaeological remains but base their argument on assumption, speculation and intuition. Such kind of arbitrary periodization could not be accepted as historical truth.

Therefore, while details of Mizo traditional belief system and cultural practices are presented in their texts, the works of Lalhnam scholars have serious problems in methodology, use of sources and interpretation. These works could not free themselves from their main objective of producing these texts, that is, to romanticize Mizo history and culture in order to counter what is called 'alien religion'.

That is why it is largely bias, and sometimes distorted historical truth. The outcome of misrepresentation of history could be very serious. It could affect the way people see themselves, others and the world. Therefore, while reading these texts, one should be aware of its flaws and be cautious in using it as the foundation of his/her work or belief.

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HISTORY OF PRE-INDEPENDENCE MIZO LITERATURE

Zoramdinthara

General characteristics of the age

The paper will cover the literary history of Mizo since 1894 till Indian independence. As the title suggest, this paper will trace the history of Mizo literature as it were during the course of this period. Pre-independence Mizo literature is a significant period in the literary history of Mizo literature and it is a turning period of social, political and literature in the history of Mizoram. This is mainly due to the impact of colonialism and arrival of Christianity in Mizoram. It was also an age of peace and social contentment. In this regard B. Lalthangliana said, "There was no more fighting between one village to another village, materialism had no place in their minds, no hatred among them and everyone enjoyed a peaceful atmosphere"¹ Christianity was like a wild fire and it soon covered the whole of Mizoram and in no time, many people were converted into Christian. He goes on to say that "Christianity began to stop their primitive pre-notion that *huai* (demons) lived in caves, trees, a small mound in a

jhum and to give up such superstitions, the Lushai Superintendent had taken strong initiative and made an order that those who were involved in such superstitions will be accused...that is why the period may be regarded as Golden Period"². Laltluangliana Khiantge also called this era as "Golden Period in Mizo literature for its remarkable achievement in literature".³

During this period, education became more popular and Lower and Upper Primary School was established in many villages of the district. "As it was spread quickly, the influences of Christianity in effecting changes found in imperative. Head-hunting was abandoned by the people when they were enlightened by the teaching of Christianity and due to the efforts of the administration. Induced by conscience, people began to stop this notorious practice. In abandoning the institution of Zawlbuk the case was however, different. It was not the policy of the government that brought about the end of Zawlbuk in the society, but was primarily due to the changed attitude of the people themselves".⁴

In fact, political awakening among the Mizo happened ten years before 1936. According to A. Thanglura, "Due to the despotic rule of some of the Sailo chiefs. To do away with the exploiting rule of the Sailo chiefs, few Lushai intelligentsia namely, Telela, Thuama, V.Z. Biaka, Suakkunga, Saikunga and Liansiama submitted a complaint to the Lushai Superintendent, N.E. Parry. But he did not pay attention to their case".⁵ They did their best to find out how to participate in the Assam Legislative Assembly. However, the Lushai Superintendent totally banned any political activities in the

Lushai district and all the Lushai intelligentsia were captured and sent to jail on 22nd October 1926. Mentioning political consciousness of the age, Lalrimawia remarks, "Under the Act of Government of India, 1935 Lushai Hills was excluded from the purview of the new constitution. Accordingly, the District was treated as 'Excluded Area' and was placed under special responsibility of the Governor General in Council in his capacity as the crown representative. However, the closeness of the Japanese troops, during the Second World War, and the political enslavement of the Mizo people in the hands of the English Superintendents and the chiefs created political consciousness and a consequent awakening in the hills".⁶ In this regard, J.V. Hluna also said, "In this way, the wars helped the Lushais to come in contact with the outside world and has accelerated in the emergence of modern political consciousness".⁷ When the British were going to depart from India, they lifted the ban on organization of such political activities in the hills and the first political party called Mizo Union was formed on 6th April 1946 under the leadership of R. Vanlawma. In short, this period witnessed gradual decline of traditional religion and what distinguish this period is birth of written Mizo literature.

Emergence of Mizo poets and essayist

From the literary point of view, the establishment of Mizo writer is an important single fact in the literary annals of this age. In other word, the consciousness of literature was more strengthened during this period. Introduction of Mizo alphabet in 1894 and translation of Bible by Christian Missionaries with the help of some Mizo gave a feeling of enthusiasm and self-confidence in writing their own

literature. Traditional Mizo poetry, secular poetry and Christian poetry were vehemently flourished during pre-independence period. Then, we have for the first time in 1908 Thanga, who introduced two Mizo patriotic Song, *Mizoram, Mizoram, ka thlahlel che* and *Mizo fate u, Finna zawng ula*. His two poems represent a strange amalgamation of love of his land Mizoram. As such, Thanga emerges as the first Mizo patriotic poet and his two poems are recited easily, gracefully and sincerely. After several years, Thanga was followed by Kaphleia who was in Calcutta for his Intermediate of Arts. While he was in Calcutta in the year 1937, Kaphleia composed *Zoram nuam* in which he reflects the beauty of Mizoram. After two years in 1939, he also completes *Zoram ka ram*. Like his previous poem, *Zoram ka ram* also vividly depicts his admiration of Mizoram, self-sufficiency and he also wishes not to fall down under the administration of other nation. Not only that, he also invokes God to give wisdom, to preserve and to carry on selflessness or *Mizo tlawmngaihna*. In 1934, Rokunga also composed his first patriotic poem called *Zawlkhawpui thenna* and after ten years he wrote his second poem *Raltiang i kai ve ang* in 1944.

With regards to Christian poetry, Patea (1894-1950) was the one who introduced and starts writing Christian poetry in the history of Mizo literature. "By his first song, *Ka ropuina tur leh ka himna hmun*, Patea marks a new chapter in the history of Mizo Christian poetry in 1920" (Thanmawia 79). Patea was soon followed by C.Z Huala (1902-1994) and R.L Kamlala (1902-1965). In no time, they were supported by other poets like Saihnuna (1896-1949), Laithangpuia (1885-1937), Siamliana (1885-1965), R. Thanghuta (1894-

1954), Thanherha (1894-1978), Zasiama (1900-1952) and so on. At the same time, secular poetry too tremendously flourished during this period. Prior to 1920, *Puma zai* was reignited in 1908 and within a very short period of time, *Puma zai* covered the whole Mizoram. Later *Puma zai* was called *Tlanglam zai* because the whole community was danced together while it was sung. Besides these traditional poems, there emerge other traditional poems like *Awithangpa zai*, *Hrangchhawni zai*, *Lengzem zai*, *Mutelen zai*, *Chalmar zai*, *Ramthar zai*, *German run zai* and *Kaihlek zai*. Undoubtedly, these were the most popular poems of the era. Then, *Awithangpa* (1887-1965) and *Hrawva* (1893-1956) also added secular poems during this period. From 1925 we have secular poets like *Dura Chawngthu* and *Vankhama*. These two poets were soon followed by *Lalzuithanga*, *Laltanpuia* and *Lalzova*. After these poets, *Kaphlei* was never known as a Poet but rather an Essayist cum Novelist. But some of his poems like *Thal* (spring) and *Zoram Ka Ram* (Zoram My Homeland) are remarkable poems. Especially *Thal* is noteworthy and it is composed in the form of a regular ode. Like other regular ode, *Kaphleia's Thal* is exalted in subject matter and the poet is serious both in the choice of his subject matter and presentation. In *Thal*, *Kaphleia* has both words, music and the music of sound and it is also a triumph of musical harmony.

Rise of Mizo drama

Mizo drama also began to germinate with the celebration of Christmas in the land. In this connection *Lianhmingthanga* said, "In 1912, Christmas day was celebrated in most of the villages with a grand feast. The

Christmas Day, 25 December 1912 will always be remembered in the history of Mizo drama, because in the evening of this very day, the first ever dramatic performance was held in a small thatched roofed theater of Thakthing Veng, Aizawl. With the initiative of the missionaries, the most successful function of variety entertainment was shown to the people for the first time”.⁸ In this dramatic performance, they acted like *Sap Mikhual leh tawng let lingtu*, *Krismas hria leh hre lo*, *Kristian leh Kristian lo in biak na*, *Mosolman putar lem in biak na* and *Borsap lem, leh thu chhia nei tu 2 leh rasi lem chang be*.

This theatre performance has encouraged Ch. Pasena (1893-1961) who just arrived from London in 1925 obtaining a Diploma in Education and then he made a fresh starts of Mizo drama. “Between 1925-1933, Pasena prepared and directed six extempore dramatic performances, which were staged in Sikulpui Hall, the popular name for Boys’ Middle English School at Mission Veng, Aizawl. All these dramas were enacted not only for entertainment but also for moral lessons. His first dramatic show- *Heroda Chawimawina* (King Herod’s Glory), a tragedy was staged in 1925 at Sikulpui Hall by the actors of Mission Veng”.⁹ Ch. Pasena was soon followed by Lalkailuaia who dramatised two Mizo folktales *Tualvungi leh Zawlpala*, staged in 1935 and *Liandova te unau* which was staged in 1935 at Assam Rifles Drill Shed. In the same year, Chawngzika also dramatized *Krista Palai* (Ambassador for Christ) which was translated into Mizo by Challiana. After three years, he also dramatized the translated works of *Kristiana Vanram Kawng zawh* (*The Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan).

Lalzuithanga was not only a poet but also a dramatist during the early stage in the history of Mizo drama. He was a dramatist cum actor and his contribution to the development of Mizo drama is notable. Laltluangliana remarks about his first play, "His first play *The Black Corner of Aijal* in 1999 achieved a great success which won the second prize in the first Drama Competition of Zosiami Cup, held in 1940".¹⁰ His second play the *Horrible* is a tragedy and was enacted on 17th October 1941 at A.R. Drill Shed Aijal. In the play, the hero is hanged and then his ghost manifested while his dead body was post mortem by a doctor. The third play of Zuia, *Hawaiian Fantasy* is a musical play to be acted with accompaniment of Hawaiian guitar and other music. It was enacted on 17th October 1941 at A.R. Drill Shed Aijal. His fourth play *Westerner* is a sociological play and acted on 17th October 1941 at A.R. Drill Shed Aijal.

Rise of Mizo essay

In regards to essay writing, Kaphleia is the one who introduce essay writing in the history of Mizo literature. He was the first essayist of all in Mizo literature. His first essay, *Kristian Beihram Pawl* (Persevere Christian) was written in 3rd May 1932. In no time, he completed more than ten essays. The best known essays of Kaphleia are *Thlirtu* (Scanner), *Ui* (Dog).

Even though the age uncertain, it is believed that C. Thuamluaia started writing essay from 1945 and some of his essays are *Zoram nipui*, *Pu Hanga leilet veng*, *Kan nun khuarei an chang tur hi*, *Hmanlai Mizo hla*, *Tawng hmasawn nan*, etc. His essay contains a vast theme and for instance his *Zoram Nipui* describes the beauty, gift and importance of

spring in the life of the Mizo. *Kan Nun Khuarei An Chang Tur Hi* is a subjective essay in which Thuamluaia compares systematically the traditional Mizo society and his contemporary society. *Pu Hanga Leilet Veng* also describes scenic beauty and the attractiveness of Pu Hanga's wet rice cultivation land. Thuamluaia's one essay entitled *Pu Duma leh Kapa* or *Pu Duma and Pu Kapa* is a very unique and thought provoking essay because it has characters and it is written in the form of a dialogue.

Zairema, a versatile thinker and writer wrote his essays both in English and Mizo. He is remembered today as an essayist and his essays are on familiar subject. They are written in clear, lucid and aphoristic style. His first essay *Ka pa, ka ei zo vek mai dawn e aw* appeared in 1941 which is soon followed by *Neuh neuh, Thukhuh, Zun, Mai mai and A no ber mai, no ber mai*. In short, his languages are effective, direct, memorable, straightforward, economy and natural. He wanted to preserve the treasures of his thoughts and his mind for the benefits of posterity in aphoristic utterance.

Emergence of children literature

In regards to children literature, role of Nuchhungi Renthlei (1914- 2006) will be remembered. From 1933, she starts writing for orphanage home children at Serkawn, Lunglei. In 1936, she published three nursery songs such as *Arpa hla te, Ui note hla te, Zing nieng hla te*. These nursery songs are soon followed by song of nature and so on.¹¹ Her children songs book called *Mizo Naupangte Hla* containing 72 songs was finally appeared in 1986. Besides these, in 1940, she wrote school children textbook called *PRIMER and Serkawn Graded Reader I & II*. In the same year, she also

collected and included thirty eight Mizo folktales in her book *Serkawn Graded Readers* which was basically designed for elementary level. In short, her styles of writing are noticeable for lucidity, terseness and strength. Hence, by considering her role in children literature, Nuchhungi Renthlei deserves to be called the 'Mother of Mizo children literature'.

Birth of Mizo fiction

A hasty survey of Mizo literature during pre-independence shows that Mizo poetry and drama were already flourished in Mizoram when Mizo start writing fiction. It is apparent that before the arrival of Christianity in Mizoram, Mizo did not know drama and Christian poetry. But, when Welsh missionaries landed Mizoram, they surely knew that poetry and drama was one important tool for spread of Christianity. During the Pre-Independence Mizo fiction (1936-1946), we have three Mizo fiction writers namely - L. Biakliana, Kaphleia and Lalzuithanga. As they did in English literature, B. Lalthangliana called these three pioneer writers the "Three wheels of Mizo Novel".¹² Therefore, these writers were praiseworthy and deserved to be called the pioneer Mizo fiction writers. Three fiction writers of this period are as follows:

L. Biakliana (1918-1941): Biakliana was born on 26th August 1918 at Mission Veng, Aizawl. In 1936 he passed Matriculation with first class under Silchar University. He then entered Cotton College, Guwahati for Intermediate Arts. Meanwhile, Tuberculosis befell upon him and in such critical situation, he could not continue his studies and he shifted to Mizoram for medical treatment. He was hospitalized in *Durtlang Hospital* (Presbyterian Hospital)

with his friend Kaphleia and they stayed at *Inte Thawveng* in September 1937. "After he recovered from his sickness in 1941, he was admitted to Cherra Theological College. There he became ill again and after recovering from his ailment, he died in 1941 at Robert Hospital, Shillong".¹³ As we have said, Mizo poetry and drama attained maturity when the first Mizo fiction appeared in 1936. In this regard, H. Lallungmuana who made a remarkable finding said, 'Hawilopari' written in 1936 appears to be the first Mizo novel...The History of Mizo novel starts from the year 1936."¹⁴ In the following year Biakliana completes his second novel *Lali*. Fortunately, the novel *Lali* won the first prize in the first story writing competition organized by Mizo Student Association. Besides his two fictions, L. Biakliana also composed more than twenty poems including some of his translations. *Kaphleia (1910 - 1940)*: Kaphleia, born on 10th January 1910 at Thiak Village started his primary education at Sialsuk village and completes class three at the same school. Then he shifted to Aizawl for his Middle School. "After he completed middle School, he went to Shillong and on 8th July 1931 he was admitted to Government High School Shillong".¹⁵ On 1st July 1935, Kaphleia passed matriculation from Government High School Shillong. Meanwhile Mr. Pugh wanted him to join the Scottish Church College and later on, he was admitted at Scottish Church College, Calcutta on 19th July 1935. On March 1937, Kaphleia spent his vacation with his friends and relatives in his village, Tachhip, but when he returned to Calcutta in July 1937, he was diagnosed with Tuberculosis, one of the most dreadful diseases of the time. Therefore, he could not continue his studies and immediately returned to Aizawl to take medical treatment. On 17th

September 1937, he reached Durtlang Hospital and was confined in *Intethawveng*, a hut separately built for T.B patients. After taking T.B. treatment, his condition rapidly improved and on 4th May 1938 he was discharged from the hospital and he reached his village Tachhip. On 15th June 1939, Kaphleia was re-admitted in *Intethawveng* at Durtlang Hospital and gradually he lost his vigor. He fell seriously ill and became unconscious. And on 13th November 1940, he died and he was buried at Tachhip Churchyard. Kaphleia's period of active literary production is very short due to his infectious Tuberculosis and it spans over three years. But, during such a short period, his genius grew in the field of essay, poetry, and novel. When Kaphleia spend his first summer vacation at Tachhip village in 1937, he heartily enjoyed vacation with his friends and relatives. "During this break period, he actively practices witting and he also helped Khamliana, chief of Tachhip in writing reports for Bawrhsap (Deputy Commissioner). He had a vast knowledge he also was a wide reader and had a thorough understanding of literary theory as well".¹⁶ Although he was admitted and hospitalized in *Intethawveng* in Durtlang Hospital Aizawl, most of his time was used for writing his diary, poem, novel, and reading books like *My Struggle by Adolf Hitler*, *Tales from Shakespeare*, *A Biography of Napoleon Bonaparte*, *Wordsworth Poems*, etc.

Kaphleia was the second fiction writer in the history of Mizo fiction. As per his diary which was written on 11th April 1939, his novel *Chhingpuui* was completed in 1939. In fact Kaphleia was suffering from Tuberculosis and taking care at *Intethawveng*, Durtlang Hospital. In the mid-1938, he was discharged from the hospital and he reached his village

Tachhip. When he was in Tachhip, he overheard the conversation of elders who were in his house to see him. Laltluangliana writes, "After listening to the gossips of the elders in their village and at the end of the year he wrote the Novel Chhingpui".¹⁷ Regarding his second novel it was not certain whether there is a second novel or not. Fortunately after deliberate interview with C. Lalvunga and cross-examination of the interview, it was found that Kaphleia wrote his second novel that is *Khawnglung Run*. "His second novel *Khawnglung Run* was completed at the end of 1939 and the manuscript of '*Khawnglung Run*' by Kaphleia was often read by their relatives and friends, but before it was really published, they misplaced the manuscript and finally it was lost."¹⁸ However, Kaphleia's place among the novelists of Mizo fiction is almost reserved and he is regarded as one of the *Pioneer of Mizo fiction*.

Lalzuithanga (1916-1950): Lalzuithanga, the third Mizo fiction writer during the Pre- independence Mizo fiction was born on 16th April 1916 at Kulikawn, Aizawl. He completed class eight Middle English which was the highest education in Mizoram at that time and meanwhile, there was no institution for further studies. "Lalzuithanga had wide experience of work as salesman in the west Mission Bookroom Aizawl, Drawing Master in Boy's Middle English School Aizawl, Assistant Commander Lushai Labour Corps, Fitter, Royal Indian Air Force, Demonstrator, Agriculture Department".¹⁹ But due to certain difficulties, he could not continue his Government service. After resigning from the government service, he runs a private business and devoted most of his time for this business. While he was travelling on account of his business, he died of a heart attack on 28th

September 1950 at Monacherra Tea Estate, Cachar, Assam. Lalzuithanga composed a number of memorable poems in his lifetime and his contribution in Mizo literature with regards to poetry is vehement. But, no definite date can be given for the compositions of his poetry. Out of his several poems, some of his major poems are *Leng dun ila*, *A hlimthla*, *Lunglen min hnemtu*, *Enchimloh Tuailiani*, *Zo hnam hla*, *Ka pianna hnam hla chu* and *Kumsul vei khua a lo thalin*. Zuithanga wrote a number of fictions- two novels and fifteen short stories. In fact, his contribution towards the growth of the Mizo fiction is marvelous and his works in the field of Mizo literature is noteworthy. Considering his contribution to Mizo fiction, Margaret L. Pachuau rightly says, "Lalzuithanga has been considered to be among the pioneering novelist in Mizo and he has been regarded to be one amongst the three wheels of Mizo novels".²⁰

In short, his place as a novelist in Mizo literature is very high. Some of his fictions are *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* (1939), *Thlahrang* (1940), *Aukhawk Lasi* (1950), *Charhuai i hlau lawm ni?* (1941), *Khawfing Chat* (1950), *Eng dan nge?* (1950) and *Enge Pawi?* (1950). Thus, all the above enumerated critical verdicts show that, pre-independence Mizo literature witnessed many vicissitudes in the future development of Mizo literature. It was an important age and it also contains inexhaustible treasures of Mizo literature, in which Mizo writers of the succeeding ages used with great skill.

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CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRADITIONAL MIZO SOCIAL PHENOMENON AND ITS CONTESTATIONS

Orestes Rosanga

The paper will reflect on the traditional practices and taboos in traditional Mizo society. This paper especially looks into areas where historians often find themselves in a dilemma related to certain phenomena in Mizo lives.

In the traditional Mizo society, the households had numerous taboos and certain societal phenomena which played important parts in their day to day lives and their surrounding environment. Among the Mizos, bigger wild animals such as Elephant, Bear, Rhinoceros, *Tumpang* and *Sele* or wild *gayal* (one of the two main species of *Sele* or wild *gayal* or bison - the common name is *Sial*) were highly regarded and if any hunter shot such animals he was acknowledged with great honour during social gatherings and when drinking *Zu* (rice beer). It was the belief that after death they would enter the abode of the dead with the spirit of such animals that they had killed and they would be honoured and be highly esteemed just as they were honoured during their life-time.

On the other hand, traditional Mizos paid due respect to a tiger. It was strongly believed that the Tiger was broad-minded, who have no intention of harming human beings. Therefore, the Tiger was not included among the *sahrang* or larger and wild animals. They did not address directly as *Sakei* or tiger but separately called *Sapui*. Mizos were also careful to talk about the *Sapui* while they were in the forest or jungle or while hunting lest the tiger would overhear their conversation. They also believed that a Tiger would secretly know a person who committed serious crimes. They believed that 'If a woman who committed adultery but did not divulge the same would usually become the prey of a tiger.'¹

Mithi tluk

Mizos believed in the journey of a person spirit to the abode of the death known as *Mithi tluk*. It was believed that when a person either got ill or unconscious, his or her spirit would leave the body and go to the abode of the death called *mitthi khua* and see the spirits of the death. Upon awakening from such incidence, the concerned person would usually have many stories to tell (about the abode of the death or the world of the death). When a person was in such a state it was called '*Mitthi tluk*'. Sometimes without visiting the abode of the death, they were in commune either with the spirit of their relatives or other spirits. This is also called *Mitthi tluk*.²

It is also to be noted that it was a practice to drink *zu* or rice beer when there was death in the village. A smart woman would usually have a pot of *zu* ready to be made for drinking. H.S. Luaia stated that his mother always kept one pot of *zu* for special occasions and in the event of death, the elders or

the men would gather together and start pouring water in the pot reaching up to the brim and started drinking the *zu*.

³ This was to show that they also shared the misfortune of the bereaved family. When a sick person who was on pain of death recovered, it was these persons who would always be eager to listen to the story told by the former.

Thla ai

Similarly, Mizos had experienced the spirit of the death which cried inaudibly in the forest. This was usually experienced when someone died at home and the relative of the deceased who was either in the chase or doing daily manual works in the *lo* or agricultural land would hear such cries for help. Sometimes a man would hear the cry of a spirit calling to succor him or her from such agony. This sort of cry made by such spirit is called '*thla ai*' or '*thla rum*'. A *thla* is a spirit of a person and *thla ai* is the cry of a spirit usually heard in the forest as an omen of the approaching death ⁴ of someone at home or in a far distant village. Due to severe sickness, a person's spirit apparently moved out in the forest and groaned or moaned due to the impending death. This was known as *thla rum*. *Thla ai* and *thla rum* are more or less similar.

If the person who heard such groans but without looking towards the direction of where the sound comes from lead the spirit towards the village, the sick person would recover from such impending death. While leading the spirit towards the house of the sick person, he should not talk to anyone or turn his head or look back even if such spirit made certain noises on the way. But if he otherwise talked or turned his head, the ill omen would surely fall on the

concerned person. Upon reaching the house and before entering, he would say aloud, *'Do not cry I have brought back his/her spirit'*. Gradually the danger of the impending death would disappear. Such was the societal traditional belief and practice of the Mizos.

Damlai thla

There were also some persons whose spirits superseded or would reach first before the actual person reached its destination. This is called *damlai thla*. Interestingly such phenomenon was experienced in 1965 by the author of this article. One night, the author then a boy of ten years and his mother visited one of their neighbours. After an hour of sitting in conversation, at about 8pm they heard a sound as if the *sekawtrawlh* or gate was opened by someone (a *sekawtrawlh* is a slip rail made to block animals from straying or usually made in front of a house a little distant away from the main entrance of a house). But nobody turned up to open the door. Then they continued their conversation. The author thought that somebody would turn up and knock at the door. Even after ten minutes still no one approached the door. Almost fifteen minutes had passed, then an old man of about 73year with a stick in his hand opened the door and entered the house. When the author asked the inmate, *"Ka Pu (my grandfather) would come in the house after 15 to 20 minutes only, as he had this "Damlai thla"* was the reply. It was his spirit that had left the body which had made a sound at the gate. His name was Kawlsuaka who died on 27 March 1967 at the age of 75 years. Surprisingly after his death, the house was not haunted. This was the type of social phenomenon experienced even after Christianity. After 2000 A.D such thing was hardly known

even if it was experienced people now hardly talk about such incidence.

Khawhring

There was also a malignant spirit believed to possess usually young girls called *khawhring*. It is closely similar to what in the English called it as 'evil eye'.⁵ A woman or young girl were usually said to have possessed a *khawhring*. One who was in possession of such spirit would become very greedy especially when such person saw someone eating. Herbert Lorrain stated:

"Such a person is quite ignorant of this herself and only comes to know of it when she finds herself accused of being the 'possessor' or 'owner' of somebody else, and causing intense colic-like pains in the abdomen of its victim... The *khawhring* spirits are also believed to bewitch food, beer, etc. and spoil them."⁶

The Mizos commonly believed that the *khawhring* spirits were always watching them while eating or when a family consumed food. Therefore, it was a practice to throw a small portion of cooked rice saying '*chhuak rawh*' or 'begone'. This was done to appease the *khawhring* and preventing it from spoiling their meal. Once the news spread in the village and beyond, that a girl was in possession of a *khawhring* she would be alienated and would be dreaded by all. Like the *tualsumsu* if any young girl was found or attributed to possess such spirit she would be deprived of future prospects of suitable life partners.

Before the advent of Christianity and even during colonial administration of the hills there were several

traditional taboos which were often spoken by the households of the village. There were rumours about such taboos like *tualsumsu* and the *zunhindawt*. A *tualsumsu* is traditionally believed to be an act of some unhealthy or unfortunate person usually a young girl. The *zunhindawt* too was an act of a person who was not of an average person, usually a man.

Tualsumsu

The *tualsumsu* is believed to be possessed by a spirit under whose influence she speaks of things which are beyond man's knowledge and imagination. A *tualsumsu* is generally a girl.⁷ Some even considered a *tualsumsu* as *zawlnei* or soothsayer. A *tualsumsu* however, cannot be considered as *zawlnei* as their behaviour was entirely different from the *Zawlnei*.

In the olden days, there were the *zawlnei* or soothsayer, mostly 'ramhuai zawl'. *ramhuai zawl* is a newcromancer, or a sorcerer, one who has a familiar spirit or one who was possessed by a spirit of divination.⁸ Such *zawlnei* with the aid or help of their *zawl* or spirit would foretell the future status of a person. The *zawlnei* also could foretell the condition of a person in connection with their ailments. Therefore, the households usually went to the soothsayer to do the *thum vawr* or augury or cast lots to know their future. Many things that were predicted by the soothsayer seems to be correct and therefore the village households usually had strong faith in the *zawlnei*.⁹ For such persons, it was good business as they always received something in return. But the study also reveals that there were fake *zawlnei* or soothsayers who would cheat others for their

venal ends or benefits. However, this had cost them the trust they received from the households of the village. Due to fake soothsayers, many households began to lose faith in them and especially after Christianity their privileged and position deteriorated.¹⁰

The *tualsumsu* under the dark night when everyone sleep, and unnoticed by the family members would go outside their house. They would go near the fence of the garden or palisade and with their head upside down pushing their head on the ground and growl or hum out unintelligible meaningless words. It is said that this action was done unknowingly, not because they wanted to, but there were some external forces or spirit which made them to do such acts.

It was also not because of sexual desire or lust as was believed by some. For instance, when a young woman was caught by a man while she was in the process of such an act and upon realizing that she was caught would be very ashamed of her action. She would beg the person who witnessed her acts not to reveal it to anyone. It is to be noted that if a man saw a girl acting in such manner, he would say “*Ka man che*” which means “I have caught you”. The woman would be very embarrassed and also very afraid that other households would know that she was a *tualsumsu*. Some men who were always on the lookout for an opportunity to sleep with a girl would always take advantage by asking the girl to sleep with him or otherwise threatened or to reveal to other households of her ‘blind behaviour’. But if they were caught by a good person they would not insist promiscuity with the girl.

It was however, natural that if any girl was caught she would be victimized and would not find any suitable partner. Therefore, due to fear of spreading such shameful news, the girl would accept the proposal of the man positively and the prize would always be sleeping with a man who saw her in such behaviour. However, as stated above a good man would not ask such promiscuity but would simply promise not to spread such undesirable social phenomenon.

As the *Tualsumsu* usually happened to be a beautiful young woman, therefore one may pose several questions - 'Was there any real *tualsumsu*? Was it a mere invention? Was it because of sexual desire that such rumours were spread? Was it due to jealousy of the rival family of the girl who were afraid that she would find a suitable partner?

One may suggest that *tualsumsu* was an act of a person who was influenced by external forces or spirits that was working within them. A person was *zel* or in trance while she was in such condition. Perhaps it may be considered as 'sleep walking' wherein the concerned person did not know of her actions as it usually took place at night. It may also be suggested that as the story of the *tualsumsu* is not found in every village and as it was a rare case, it was more or less an invention by some interested household members.

According to C. Lianthanga, at night, the *tualsumsu* used to *su* (pounding the head on the ground) with the head turned upside down. Some could know that their spirit did such thing, whereas some were ignorant of their own actions. Upon waking up in the morning, some would have a headache and feel their body seriously aching.¹¹ It was quite

unfortunate to be in such state. If a person happened to see a *Tualsumsu* he or she had to wake her up and if not done it was believed that the concerned person would pass away soon.¹²

CVLMS Dawngliana believed that in *tualsumsu* there was something that of '*mi aia*' *suksak* or pounding of the head for someone else.¹³ The belief is that there were some persons who pounded their head on the ground for others or someone or some spirits who impersonated the concerned person. It is possible that they could act (while in trance) in place of others. In some instance, the person whom they represented even with good health would for no reason or show sign of sickness feel sick and instantly die. The *tualsumsu* did such acts while sleeping and the spirit that came out was the one that *su* (the one who pounded).¹⁴

Further, Dawngliana believes that "For an ordinary person to go upside down was impossible. There were both male and female for such acts. If they were female, they do not necessarily expose their secret parts."¹⁵ However this may not be totally true. In traditional Mizo society, women's clothing was very bare as compared to the modern society. Apart from clothes that was wrapped around their waist, they wore nothing underneath. If they pounded their head towards the ground obviously their clothes would fall down. Any conscious person would surely be aware of their clothing, however, those who were in trance would surely lose consciousness and would not be in a position to take care of covering their secret parts. Therefore, if a man saw a girl act in this way, especially if he was a person who was always on the lookout for an opportunity for promiscuity,

he would surely be tempted to threaten the girl. In this way, the woman sometimes would have no choice but to comply with the person who had seen her or caught her during such acts.

There are several persons who really had experienced such phenomenon. R.Lalfakawma of Seling village(to the east of Aizawl) stated:

“I have heard or known of *Tualsumsu* and *Zunhindawt* from the story told during my childhood times. Today even when I asked the elders they were not very clear about such taboos. I think it is a wild imagination which later turned into a reality.”¹⁶

He further stated:

“*Tualsumsu* mostly the affects females (especially young women). If caught while doing such acts, the person concerned would automatically discontinue doing such acts.”¹⁷

Rindika, in response to the assertion made by R. Lalfakawma of Seling village, (to the east of Aizawl) on the question of the ‘*Tualsumsu* and *Zunhindawt*’ defended his argument on the following grounds:

“I cannot say that Lalfakawma was completely wrong in this regard but it contradicted the erstwhile belief and knowledge of the Mizos. Today my grandmother from my father’s side is 90 years old who is now still living with us. When I was a bit younger she used to tell me of about the *tualsumsu*. That was the story heard during her younger days. According to my grandfather’s version, (who the later told to my mother), the *tualsumsu* is something like spirit. It was not that the body, or the real self which was upside down making the head to pound on the ground, but some spirit representing or taking the

place of a human form. Perhaps it was their spirit itself taking the form of their appearance or look alike which made themselves to turn upside down and to pound the head on the ground whenever possible. The person who saw it could recognize that it was the *tualsumsu*. Those *tualsumsu* also could easily know their acts. However, the real person would always be in a sick bed. But in the morning they would tell “I pounded heavily or seriously on a particular area, and my head is paining severely.”¹⁸

Similarly, there are those who held that ‘Upon entering a person’s body, the evil spirit would move about at night. The *tualsumsu* would stand upside down usually near the *vawkchaw kuang* (a pigs trough, usually made of a log of wood or bamboo) of someone. When someone hears such sounds, it was as if someone pounded unhusked rice in a mortar. But such a person never knew what she was doing.¹⁹ In the morning she would usually feel that her head and neck were very painful. They also said that it was taboo to see the *tualsumsu*.²⁰

Since this was the case the *Tualsumsu* may not be just an invention or a mere tale or false belief. One may suggest that there were some external forces that made them to act in this way. Socially Mizos are very much concerned about their health particularly with regard to their future spouse or daughter-in-law. If it was found or heard that a girl was infected with a particular disease or charged as unhealthy person and if such rumours spread she was considered unclean and treated with contempt by the households of the village. Hence the girl usually faced certain difficulties in finding suitable partner in the village.

Zunhingdawt

According to C. Lianthanga, *Zunhindawt* was a person who drank the urinated liquid (below the verandah of a house). The person who used to act in such manner were believed to die soon.²¹ In the case of the *Zunhindawt* like the *Tualsumsu* the 'evil spirit took an opportunity to act in this way'. Oral tradition tells us *Zunhingdawt* were mostly affected or suffered by young girls, while others thought it to be a young man.

The belief is that this was done due to ill health. But other held that the concerned person was compelled to do it as there were some external forces behind such acts. They would be in a sort of trance and drink when someone was urinating. They would awaken only when they were caught doing such acts. One eminent Mizo writer stated that even in the 1940s there was a person who due to ill health acted in such a way.²²

Rindika stated:

"According to me the *Zunhindawt* is a sort of disease mostly connected to internal ailments or stomach pain (*kawchhung lam natna*). When we say *Zunhindawt*, we usually think in terms of or to drink the urine only, but it was not. *Zunhindawt* mostly drank a pool of dirty water that was thrown and mixed with *chirh* or slushy or muddy water. Therefore it has no connection with sex and the *Zunhindawt* should not be regarded as a sexually perverted person."²³

The *Zunhindawt* could also be among young girls; but upon realizing such abnormal acts would be very ashamed and would not disclose their behaviour.

But whether they liked it or not, there would be a time when they were forced to drink *zunhing* or the slushy mud water or urine. If they do not act accordingly, they would feel muddled or become perplexed. If they immediately drank the *zunhing*, they once again became normal. As mentioned above it looks like one type of disease, which one could not easily understand it. Perhaps it may also be the work of evil spirits.

According Pu Thangseia of Lallen village (in the western hills), ‘When we say *Zunindawt* or *zunhingdawt*, it also means that a person was in trance and was possessed by the evil spirit. It may be due to fear of such spirits that he had to drinks someone’s urine. Some said the evil spirit came and drank while a person was urinating.’²⁴ Pu Thangseia further stated that ‘Sometimes it was merely made up with no purpose whatsoever.’²⁵

R.Lalfakawma of Seling village(to the east of Aizawl) stated:

“In the traditional Mizo society they mostly used to urinate near the main door of their house called ‘*Luhkapui*’ (the platform built at the side of or in front the main entrance of a Mizo house). The urine that were excreted were drunk by the *Zunhindawt*.”²⁶

R.Lalfakawma however, argued “I strongly believed that the *Zunhindawt* could be done by the sexually perverted persons only.”²⁷ Since this was the case there would be no fear or dread in the society as it was more or less done by a person who has sexual desire. Such persons would clandestinely or unknown to the woman who was about

to urinate would open their mouth to drink the urine excreted out by the former.

In response to R.Lalfakawma in the context of *Zunhindawt*, C.VLMS Dawngliana argued: “We cannot simply assess *Zunhindawt* as due to sexual desire, and this claim is sheer preposterous or a dubious assertion.”²⁸ He further stated: “A person who had experienced such acts stated that it was like a firefly wherein all the fingers of the concerned person shone or gleamed.”²⁹ Although such an occasion seemed to be very rare, the information was gained from those who had experienced it. It was also said a person who saw such acts may have been in a trance due to external forces. Others held that in the olden days, the Mizos believed that there was *Phung* (a ghost or a bogey man or a spook) who used to drink the *zunhin*.³⁰

It is to be noted that among traditional Mizo society a young girl, beautiful and talented in the household chores and hard-working would be the attraction of the young men and their parents. The girl’s parent would always look for well to do son in-laws for their daughter. The contention of the boy’s parent or relatives was also very much connected with the health of the bride to be. But once the rumour spread that the girl was a *Tualsumsu* or *Zunhindawt*, naturally none dared to get married with her. In this way the most suitable and eligible girl would be denied by all. But in the event of the affairs, certain young man from the common household would come up and the girl’s parent were forced to part with their daughter who was being accused of the *Tualsumsu*. In this way the unlucky young man could become a lucky man whereas the lucky young girl could

become the unlucky one by marrying the least eligible person of the village.

In conclusion, such phenomena can be said to have a great influence on traditional Mizo society but which none can explain properly and had definite answers to it. However as it was known since ancient days through oral sources we may conclude that they were mysterious societal phenomena that existed in the traditional Mizo society.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS OF THE EARLY MIZO

Esther Laltlankimi

Environmental history as a recent trend of historical studies have gained importance during the last two or three decades. The 1980s saw the emerging development in the field of environmental history as a result of environmental awareness. This trend was also followed up in India when scholars like Madhav Gadgil, Ramachandra Guha and others have come up to meet the situation. As far as North-East is concerned, few studies have come up in the last ten years or so. Scholars also similarly came out to study the different aspects of environmental history of Mizoram. This paper is an attempt to study history of the Mizo from the perspective of environmental ethics which shaped the ethics and value system of the Mizo to a large extent. Main focus will be placed on pre-colonial Mizoram because; this was the period when the Mizo values and ethics which guided the society and community living of the Mizo were formed.¹

Environmental ethics and the tribal

Environmental ethics mainly examines how human beings should interact with the non-human world around

them. The word “ethic” nurtures a vast idea of ought to be—how we should live and what we ought to do; what kind of behaviour is right and wrong; what our moral obligations might be. Ethics refers to a sense of fairness, of right and wrong, and encompasses virtues such as honesty, compassion and loyalty in a way that benefits society.

Environmental ethics, then, relates to the harmony in the relationship between humans and the natural environment. The ethics of sustainability ensures that in a world where individuals have to compete for resources, human beings learn to cooperate with each other and the rest of nature for the mutual well-being of all. Environmental laws and ethics may be particularly important for tribes with cultural and spiritual connections to their environment and land.² Evolutionary interpretations of the tribal mind may be explained as pre-logical, pre-scientific, irrational, primitive mind. Considerations of tribal life have led many scholars to conclude that they are natural philosophers— that the tribal mind puts the philosophy of the finite into practice.

“Environmental ethics helps us analyse the moral relations between human beings and the natural environment and forms a context in which our system of environmental laws is understood. Environmental ethics are comprised of values, which underlie judgments about what is “good”—either morally or materially—and norms, which are designed to place values into operation at the social level by making judgments about certain conduct.”³ Discussion and development of tribal environmental ethics benefit tribes as well through this promotion of self-determination and sovereignty. Development and articulation of tribal environmental ethics constitutes an expression of tribal self-

determination.⁴ Moreover, by determining for themselves what constitutes their community environmental ethics, tribes can avoid buying ethical paradigms “sold” to them by non-Natives: paradigms designed to benefit those outside of tribal communities, rather than tribes or individual Indians. A close connection to the land and environment certainly has motivated the development of environmental ethics for many tribal communities. Tribes are both generally and specifically motivated to develop tribal environmental ethics. In general, development of ethical paradigms evidences self-determination, which in turn promotes tribal sovereignty. More specifically, many tribes may be motivated to develop their environmental ethics given their close connection, both culturally and spiritually, to their land and environment. Furthermore, the example of the need for tribal legal ethics demonstrates the importance of tribes cultivating their own ethical norms; given differences do exist between tribal and non-tribal systems.⁵

In studying pre-colonial Mizoram, it has to be noted that it was an environmental stage of what Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha termed as “gathering stage”⁶. Prior to the arrival of the British, many parts of the Indian mainland have passed this stage and entered the settled cultivation stage and also the Industrial stage. However, the Lushai Hills was still in that of the hunting- gathering stage. Neither settled agriculture nor industry developed. Hunting the wild animals, gathering vegetables from the forests and also jhum cultivation was the pillar of subsistence. The Mizo depended almost exclusively on human muscle power, wood fuel, animals and grain. Their knowledge base was fairly limited, and nature was viewed unpredictable.⁷ The ability to store

food and other materials was limited. The economy within this mode of resource use is based on resources which are acquired within a small area. The diversity of plant and animal substance consumed from the social group's immediate surroundings is high, but the actual variety used is small. The quantities consumed are restricted to subsistence needs. They respond to environmental variations by adaptations to local conditions.⁸

Formation of ethics in relation to environment

The Mizo had their own understanding and knowledge about the environment. The Mizo had always been cognizant of the world they lived in. The main subsistence jhumming cultivation, in which the Mizo knew not of how soil erosion and depletion takes place, and how their hunting game, the only way of their survival, destructed the wild; they had their ethics- the morals in which they felt obliged to the environment that surrounded their lives.

Many British administrators who arrived in the Lushai Hills observed the condition in which the Mizo lived. They saw how dirty the children were. McCall in his book "The Lushai Chrysalis" has mentioned that the dirt of the Mizo children were beyond imagination.⁹ One can imagine the sanitation level of the Mizo. The type of agriculture practised was the most destructive one; the hunting practices were not that of conservation. Therefore, in trying to comprehend the ethical values of the Mizo, it must be hard to say that the Mizo were people who developed environmental concern. However, this is wrong. Environment was the sole survival of the Mizo. Their life was deeply connected with the forest. This might be the reason why they considered

every mountain, forests, trees, rivers to have been possessed with spirits. This may have been their idea of protectionist or preservative technique. They lived in constant fear of these spirits which they called "*huai*". Their life was busy in trying to appease these '*huais*' as they were considered to be the cause of illness and diseases. The notion of 'fear' is therefore used as a tool for invoking a respect and hence a set of moral codes to be followed while dealing with these natural forces like forests, rivers etc.

In forming the moral code of conduct in relation to the environment, the Mizo had maintained the code through the use of quotes and sayings in the form of phrase, idioms and proverbs. This unwritten law which has been passed on by generations serve as the most important law which have survived and moulded the ethical standards of the Mizo today.

It is helpful to look more specifically at some examples of how the Mizo Native peoples and tribes articulate their environmental ethics. Tribes are doing more than just conceptualizing alternative ethical paradigms; they are essentially developing and implementing laws based on such alternative paradigms. Tribal customs and traditions, sometimes called customary law, traditional law and tribal common law, can prove constructive in better understanding tribal environmental ethics.

Mizo ethical values

It is necessary to understand formation of Mizo ethics from the social perspective. It is the social value maintained by the Mizo which shaped the foundation of

Mizo ethics which further shaped the environmental ethics of the Mizo. In discussing the Mizo social values, a very common saying is “*semsem dam dam, eibil thi thi*” which means “share and live, share not and die” which connotes the very nature “*tlawmngaihna*”¹⁰ wherein almost all foundation of Mizo values and ethics were formed. This is also seen in the case that the highest social ladder that the Mizo man could achieve was that of a *thangchhuahpa*¹¹. The title ‘*Thangchhuahpa*’ could be obtained in two ways. One was “*in lama thangchhuah*”¹² and the other “*ram lama thangchhuah*”.¹³ The former “*in lama thangchhuah*” could be achieved by performing a number of rituals which included preparing a feast for the whole village a number of times with different prescribed animals. The very fact that one wanted to become wealthy was due to his desire to become a “*thangchhuahpa*”, by which he will become the most respected person, climbing the highest social ladder in the society. This clearly connotes that even if one is wealthy, he wishes to serve his village and not spend all the wealth by himself. This is also important in maintaining an egalitarian society, an equilibrium, in which the wealthy one would not pile for himself alone. Having said these, it must, however, be remembered that the *thangchhuahpa* wanted to become so mainly because of his desire to earn a position and also the hope of entering a “*pialral*”¹⁴ after his death, where he could enjoy eternal peace.

Values of the Mizo

A Mizo youth cherished to be brave as this was desired of him by the elders in the society. This was obvious for a hunting and warring people which the Mizo were. They

had to occasionally fight to protect their village against external aggression from a neighboring village. In hunting, physical prowess and bravery in facing fearful animals in the jungles were required to be possessed by the youth. For all such reasons, bravery was highly valued in the society. The highest social status of a Mizo man was that of *Thangchhuah*, where a man either prepares and arranges a feast for the society a number of times or where he exhibits fearless acts in hunting exploits where one has to kill at least one enemy and a hoard of wild animals. All these feats require bravery and that shows how Bravery is valued in the Mizo society. Next to bravery is character, a decent and courteous behavior especially to elders is considered very important. When going out for a hunt or to the fields, it is impolite to take food before the elder. This was how they showed respect to the elders.¹⁵

Tlawmngaihna as the Ultimate Ethical Code : Every Mizo was expected to abide by *tlawmngaihna*, a code of conduct characterized by “selflessness” or “service before self”. The entire community living as well as human relation with the natural world was guided by this much valued code of conduct *tlawmngaihna*. It was an ethical code of conduct which the Mizo, male or female, always maintained not only within the village but also outside the village- in the jhums, rivers, village springs as well as in the hunt. If any villager was sick and was unable to slash and burn the jungle for jhumming, his neighbors would readily come forward lending helping hands to do the work for him.

Zawlbuk as a significant institution for maintenance of Mizo ethics : A well-organized institution *Zawlbuk*, also

the boy's dormitory was a place where almost all the ethics were formed. This was so possible because it was here that the said most valued ethical code "*tlawmngaihna*" was learnt. The *Zawlbuk* served as the educational, cultural and communal center for the village¹⁶. It maintained a distinct set of rules and conduct where the young boys graduated the course of "discipline" here. The most important function of the *Zawlbuk* was that it served as the protector or defence for the village in times of War and danger from the jungle. It was here in the *Zawlbuk* that the *Val Upa*¹⁷(the elders) passed on the myths, the legends, stories and the various parables and the codes to the *tlangval*(youths)¹⁸ to generations and generations that follow. The legendary stories connected with animism, about creation, the ethical codes and the customary laws were orally transmitted to the young who again sustained the society. It is almost impossible to understand the development of the *Zo* culture without a mention of the *Zawlbuk* for its fundamental significance.

Construction of Mizo Societal Ethics: Being such a primitive society with a very superstitious woven world,¹⁹ it is hard to believe that the Mizo developed and formed a very good set of rules of conduct for the society. How were they able to form such values? Moving and shifting from one place to another frequently in the jungles, with limited source of energy, the Mizo needed a closely connected community to survive where everyone could live harmoniously. This they did so with the well-organized set of rules and laws set up by the society. These conducts may differ a little from clan to clan. However, they follow a similar set of rules regarding the functioning of a community.

Ethical conduct of communal harmony: Discipline: The Mizo society was a close knit society where almost everyone was a next of kin. However, kinship could not be the sole binding force that bonded the entire village. They had a well-defined moral code ²⁰of ethics as a unified community which always bounded them together. This was the unwritten law. Be it in the fields (*Jhum*) or within the village, the Mizo maintained certain codes in community living. Constructing a house encroaching public road and dirtying a public road was considered inhumane and unethical. They believed that cleaning and clearing public path would lead to a long life. Hurting an animal or crops belonging to a neighbor has a term called “*suahtsuahsingsihlip*”. It is believed that the ones who committed such crime would not be successful and would be followed by misfortune and would not live long. There was also a belief that construction of a house in reverse of the previous house would lead to insanity. It is called “*tlungleh*”. Passing stool on a public road was considered a great offence. Elders believed that they would die a horrible death. A Mizo therefore consider this an unwritten offence and doing so is crossing the limits of the ethical standard of the society. There is a very special connotation which very well explains the spirit of “*tlawmngaihna*” in connection with the farming ethics. A saying: “*Mai leng an ûmngailo*” is quite relevant for this matter. Mai is a pumpkin. It is, in fact, one of the most common vegetables that the Mizo cultivated. Leng means “visit” or “go out”. The saying means if a vine from your *jhum* stretches out to a neighboring *jhum* and if it happens to bear fruits there, the fruits may not be pursued. It is considered unethical to pursue the fruit even when it is yours. This conduct was applied not only in the case of crops or vegetables, but it rather acted as a connotation that

shaped other societal ethics of community life. Another example is that if strips of rice fell towards our jhum from the neighboring jhum, it is considered ethical to throw the amount back to their jhum and so on.

In valuing nature

In conjunction with their various practices of restrained use, the Mizo were remarkable for the great diversity of biological resources they utilised. They valued very wide range of biological diversity, and evolved cultural practices. They regarded nature as the primary provider of their needs and as such wastage and extravagant use of resources was virtually absent. The resources that nature provided were used only to meet their needs; beyond all resources were economically and judiciously managed. It was this value system maintained by the Mizo in connection to the environment that shaped the social and other ethical values and standards of the Mizo society which helped them live harmoniously with the community as well as the environment around them.

The Harmony of all Existence: To illustrate the Mizo as living in perfect harmony with others may be incorrect. They were hunting warrior tribe. There were times that they were the reasons for many wrongs happening in nature. However, as far as possible, they tried to maintain living in harmony with others, their fellow human beings and also the world that surrounded them. Man is not unique even in the possession of knowledge. Primordial knowledge came to him from birds and animals. The Mizo felt that they should neither harm trees nor animals unnecessarily. There are sayings like: *"Thingte pawhin beng an nei"* which literally

means "*even the trees have ears*". Even though the saying is meant to avoid bad mouthing other people in the forest, it connotes the respect they regard to the trees. It is said that this saying came from the fact that "one should never badmouth or curse a chief because it will be very harmful if it reaches the ears of the chief". The context of this saying is that the other fellow who wanted favour from the chief often reported the talks of the friend in the forest to the chief. Connoting trees as having ears thus came about. Birds are also sometimes known to be foretellers of upcoming incidents. They say that animals played a role in bringing about communal harmony and living with other creatures. Every creature is an organic part of the cosmos. Nobody reigns supreme; one is only different from the other. Every creature performs the same paradigmatic act in creation and preservation.

Preservation: Animals were viewed to have a superior instinct to human. They largely depended on the behaviour of an animal to predict and understand the happenings of their surroundings. For example, if a fowl was frightened at night and made a usual sound, it was regarded as a sign that someone would die. If the gibbons hooted during the night, it meant as a sign that someone would die an unnatural death.²¹ Animals also served an important purpose for the humans. This was perhaps why they venerated animals to a certain degree. For instance, a cock is an important time keeper in the Mizo society. They were also used for the purpose of choosing a fertile land while choosing a new site for cultivation. Let us take another example of birds. Usually before the start of a hunting party, a bird (irliak) was released and it is believed that if the bird flew high towards the jungle, it would be a sure sign of success. But if it flew backwards

towards the village, they considered that the hunt would end in failure. There were folktales where animals had also been represented as not only humans but as saviours and messengers for the humans as well. Vahmim (bird), as messengers, animals and natural elements are often represented as the ones that warn them for good luck and ill luck.²²

Taboo: Custodian of Environmental Ethics: The Pre-colonial Mizo society drew a very clear line of what should be done and what should not be done. This was represented not only in the form of customary laws and regulations but something which they lived according to. They tried to maintain and keep up with these principles as far as possible. Though presented as taboo, these are the environmental principles which the Mizo felt they were obliged to live up to. These sets of principles are kept in the form of sayings of what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Although the word taboo is used here which is sometimes referred to as *thianglo*²³, the taboos may as well be read as parables or significant sayings of the Mizo which helped the Mizo community and nature to live in harmony with one another. They serve as the guardian of the Mizo social values.

The Mizo dealt with a world which they believed was permeated with spiritual entities. They have a word for it called “*serh*” which J.H Lorrain describes as tabooed or inhibited for all except the special purpose for which it is set apart/ to regard or treat as sacred or set apart for a special purpose or to keep or observe. Shakespeare and Parry recorded several cases to show the way these concepts of taboo operated in Mizo life.²⁴ For instance, if anyone died from things other than ordinary illness, it is called *Sarhi* and the whole village would observe the day as *Hrilh* and declare it a

public holiday. *Hrilh* was performed to ward off the ill luck that people had experienced.²⁵ If anything occurred that is *serh*, a *hrilh* would always take place.²⁶ There was also a concept of “*thianglo*” which can be translated as “unlawful” or “ill omened”. *Thianglo* can be a part in different aspects of the Mizo life. For instance, if a person finds a *thianglo* beside his jhum, he is compelled move elsewhere even if the agriculture was at a very advanced stage, so as to avoid death or misfortune. *Thianglo* can also be connected with the construction of houses. While constructing a house, the Mizo observed this very carefully. Numerous *thianglos* were also connected with dreams and pregnancy as well. The Mizo, as far as possible, always try to avoid these kinds of practices. Some of the things considered regarded as omen may not necessarily be significant to maintain a better environment. A closer study of most of these so called omens could be regarded among ancient or traditional science.

An important note to make is that behind these taboos and superstitions, there frequently lies certain ethical values which may as well be considered environmental ethics. The Mizo have traditionally transmitted these ethics sometimes in the form of parables and fables. If someone discovered a water spring and kept that information to himself or herself it was considered as *thianglo*. This was believed to bring misfortune to the family of the finder. It is ethical to share natural resources to the society. Cruel treatment of other people or animals, ill-treating or torturing them was *thianglo*. It was believed that those who did so would experience much suffering before their own death. It also implies kindness towards all beings. Sayings of the Mizo may be quoted out here in this regard.

Kindness towards animals: The Mizo spiritual view includes a holistic vision of the world, which takes into account the smallest object to the largest. These sayings prove it so.

- One who harms the animal entering a garden will suffer the same fate as the animal he hurts.
- Hurting an animal while the wife is pregnant will result in birth of a child with ugly birthmarks.
- Harming parts of an animal for consumption is an act of an overly greedy person. It will lead to poverty.
- Helping a helpless animal while they face attack is a blessing. The Creator will help us when we face attack.
- The one who destroys an ant hill intentionally while passing by will be followed by ill-luck. It is said that they will be sick on festive days.

These beliefs or sayings may not be the actual reality of what happens to the wrong doer. It, however, is the manifestation that the Mizo cared and showed kindness even to the smallest of animals or creations like an ant. The ethical codes were maintained in such a way that it is considered harmful for a person to behave cruelly.

Having discussed the relation of the pre-colonial Mizo with their natural surroundings, it can be understood that the notion of remembering the Mizo as barbaric, head-hunting savages with no concept of environmental concern is wrong. The Mizo were ones having certain values and ethics with the natural world, the animals, trees, mountains, rivers around them. It was this value system maintained by the Mizo in connection with the environment that shaped the social and other ethical values and standards of the Mizo

society which helped them live harmoniously with the community as well as the environment around them. It is true that the early Mizo did not develop a concrete set of rules regarding treatment of the forests and wildlife which led to depletion of resources. However, the level of destruction that the Mizo did to the environment was not something that caused permanent harm which disturbed the ecological balance of nature.²⁷ In discussing social values and ethics of the Mizo, we also come to understand that the most important social value of the Mizo “*tlawmngaihna*” which is still held proudly even today was not a construction of its own. The various practices that guided the Mizo community life in living with their fellow beings and the natural world around them harmoniously was, in fact, the precursor of the conduct of “*tlâwmngaihna*”. The fact that the Mizo refrained from killing particular animals, the avoidance of establishing their jhums near *sih* and the idea of preservation definitely displays that pre-colonial Mizo lived in harmony with nature. At the same time, it may be an exaggeration to conclude that perfect harmony existed between the Mizo and the environment because conflicts were there, but no permanent harm was done to nature.

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References:

- ¹ The word Mizo is the name of a tribe, majority of them found in the state of Mizoram, situated in the North-East corner part of India.
- ² Tribal laws incorporate several different types of law, including treaties, constitutions, customary and traditional laws, legislative enactments, and administrative rule making.

- ³ Rebecca Tsosie, “Tribal Environmental Policy in an Era of Self-Determination: The Role of Ethics, Economics, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge”, 21 VT. L. REV. p. 243. from Kronk Warner, Elizabeth Ann, *Looking to the Third Sovereign: Tribal Environmental Ethics as an Alternative Ethical Paradigm* (January 23, 2016). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2721102> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2721102>.
- ⁴ Frank Pommersheim, (1989), *The Reservation as Place: A South Dakota Essay*, 34 S.D. L. REV. 246.
- ⁵ ‘Looking to the Third Sovereign: Tribal Environmental Ethics as an Alternative Paradigm’ by Elizabeth Ann Kronk Warne, published in *Pace Environmental Law Review* Volume 33 Issue 3 Spring 2016 Climate, Energy, and Our Underlying Environmental Ethic; also in *Ethics of caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and feminist philosophies*, Kyle Powys Whyte and Chris Cuomo, available in *Research Gate*, published in January 2017.
- ⁶ Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, (1992), *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p. 15.
- ⁷ Sangkima, Mizos, *Society and Social Change*, p 48.
- ⁸ After settling down in the present area, Mizoram, the Mizo rarely move out from the Mizo Hills. They lived a self-sufficient subsistence economy and did not seem to have trade relations with the neighbouring states except on very rare occasions. Hunting and agriculture was the main basis of their lives. As late as 1894 when the missionaries came to the hills, they were merely dressed.
- ⁹ A.G. McCall, (1949), *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, (Reprint, 2015), Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, p. 22.
- ¹⁰ Tlawmngaihna does not have an exact equivalent meaning. It means chivalry or an act of selfless service. The utmost ethical standard and the most virtuous value of a Mizo is tlawmngaihna. Every action of Mizo is based on his level of tlawmngaihna.
- ¹¹ A thangchhuahpa is the title of a man who secured the most respected status in the Mizo society.
- ¹² It means thangchhuah at home.
- ¹³ It means thangchhuah in the forest.
- ¹⁴ A heavenly abode where one could live peacefully after death. It is necessary for a thangchhuahpa to please the spirit of the animals killed by performing a ritual called “Ai” as it is believed that the animal would follow him as a servant even in the afterlife.

- ¹⁵ These practices are found among many highlanders in SE Asia and perhaps among the racial stocks inhabiting the highlands.
- ¹⁶ Mangkhosat Kipgen, (1997), *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter Between Christianity and Zo Culture In Mizoram*, Mizo Theological Conference, Aizawl, *op.cit.*, p. 61.
- ¹⁷ Val Upas played a big role in guiding young men in all walks of life in the early Mizo community. They were not only elders but also teachers for the Mizo youth.
- ¹⁸ Tlangval is a Mizo term for an unmarried Mizo youth. Though it connotes unmarried men, they sometimes refer to the young married men as well. The female counterpart is known as “nula” which means “an unmarried girl”.
- ¹⁹ In almost all the stories, legends and early writings of the Mizo, the Mizo were always considered to be deeply superstitious. A careful study of those superstitions, however, prove to be otherwise were embodiment of tribal indigenous and ecological knowledge
- ²⁰ The unwritten moral codes of conduct were unwritten laws passed on to generations through the sayings, fables and most importantly actions which the Mizo always tried to live up to. Ethics with regard to community as well as the ethics with regard to the natural world around them was certainly maintained through these moral laws.
- ²¹ J. Shakespeare, *The Lushai Kuki Clans*, Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, 1983, *op.cit.*, p. 101.
- ²² Animism in the Mizo life is cited here because relation of humans with animals help the Mizo revere certain kinds of animals. This is significant to a Mizo who were considered a pure hunting tribe and community, where meat served the most important diet of the people.
- ²³ Thiangolo means unclean, unsafe, which is not allowed on account of superstition.
- ²⁴ Shakespeare, *op.cit.*, p. 89.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ N.E. Parry, (Rep Jan 2009), *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram, p.88.
- ²⁷ The level of destruction was minimal. The burnt forests recovered their manure in a few years’ time. Big trees were seldom cut down. Rivers and streams were not polluted, wild animals were not wiped out. It was only after the coming of the British and their forest and wildlife policies that destruction on a large scale was witnessed.

THE EARLIER FUNERARY PRACTICE OF THE PAITES

Zamkhan Khual Guite

Birth and death are significant events of an individual and the social group. So significant are these events that certain ceremonies, rites and rituals are attached to it. The birth of a child is welcomed with joviality and gay while the death of an individual is mourned and aggrieved. This paper is an attempt to write the history of funerary practices of the Paites that was prevalent during the pre-Christian period. Attempt will be made to bring into light the organization of funerary practices, the cultural beliefs and the knowledge attending to these aspects.

The sound of a gong, other than that sounded by those who were buying gongs or that in a feast and drink ceremony, or the sound of gunshots suggests that death befall a village.¹ When a person died, whatever social status she/he held, the body was not buried right away. The corpse was kept for at least a week, in case of a commoner, or a month or two, in case the person was socially eminent. Death comes unexpectedly and no one readily prepares to witness death. A cloth to be buried with the corpse had to be woven as

soon as a person died and it usually took a couple of days to complete the weaving. Messengers were sent to villages where the bereaved family had relatives. *Zu*, beer made from fermented rice, had to be brewed and the relatives of the bereaved family from other villages were waited. These relatives also did not come empty-handed. They first prepared beer, collect necessary items required for paying homage to the dead and only after which they could attend the funeral service of the dead.² Only after completion of the mentioned, the last rites of the dead could be performed.

A bier, called *Lang*, made from wood or bamboo used to keep the dead body in a sitting position and *Akgesawm*, a chaplet where symbols of war trophies, animals caught in game hunt, feasts of merit organized and other cultural significances were also prepared right away.³

*Inndongta*⁴ members of the bereaved family came with beers to the household and the matter over the dead was discussed. The deceased's *Pu*, the wife-giver to his/her father, would bring one tail feather of a hornbill, *Vaphual Mei*, and one red-dyed he-goat hair, *Sawnkai*, and stick in a calabash filled with beer lees, known as *Thawlhuan*, which was a little bigger than the size of a fist. The calabash was kept adjacent to the head of the dead body.

Be it death, festival or feast, *Zu* occupied an important place in the society and such occasions were considered to be incomplete without *Zu*. The first drinking of beer over death could be witnessed here and it was called *Laitah Zu*. Literally, *lai* is the umbilical cord and *tah* means to cut or disconnect, although the umbilical cord was already cut at

birth. Here, the drink is called *Laitah Zu* because the death of a family member means the living relationship of the dead and its family was cut eternally and for which the beer was drank in order to decide the ceremonies to be conducted upon the dead and so its disposal. The drink was conducted on the day itself had the event not been at night and in case the event occurred at night the drink was conducted the following day.

Kuang-uk was practiced during the pre-literate period where the corpse was kept in a hollowed out tree and fire lit below it.⁵ Besides *Kuang-uk*, N. Gouzanang writes that for a deceased to be kept two to three months, *Kuang-uk* was not done. A hollowed out tree for keeping the corpse was prepared right away with a bamboo pipe fixed underneath so that the body fluid of the dead may drip. A pit is dug below the floor of the house to which the body fluids from the pipe would drip.⁶

Since the corpse was kept for a long period of time, the village community gathered around the dead from the night *Laitah Zu* was drunk till the night when the body was buried. They were known as *Misi gal* or *Si gal* in short. They were served one pot of beer each night which was borne by the bereaved household and their *Inndongta*. Songs were sung⁷ and amusements were conducted to hold a wake for the dead during the night. One such amusement was called *Lumsuih* which was a kind of dance performed by sitting and holding out both arms starting from the door step of the house to the back yard and the person who could go the most number of rounds was considered as a strong and stiff person. The tradition was also an act of testing the

strength of individuals.⁸ Apart from the family and relatives of the deceased, young men and women attended during nights. At late night, the young men will leave the house and go to their respective *Ham* to spend the night.⁹

Besides the men and women attending the dead, the *Sisawm* was the principal attendant to the corpse. *Sisawm* is the other name of *Tanu Thumna*, a married sister or daughter, of an *Inndongta* institution who attended the corpse. She bathed the corpse, washed its cloths, combed its hair and dressed the corpse.¹⁰ The *Sisawm* was obliged to take care of the corpse all this time during the corpse was retained. Specific attendant to the corpse was required since the corpse was fumigated or heated from below with fire. By doing so, the body was left to shrivel, the body fluids began to drip and the skin began to crack. The *Sisawm* peeled off parts of the skin that was likely to fall and kept it in a gourd bottle and hung it at the back yard of the house.¹¹ The role of attending the corpse was specifically given to her but she was assisted by the other *Tanu* members; usually there are three *Tanu*, viz., *Tanupi* or *Tuampi*, *Tanu Nau* or *Tuam Nau* and *Tanu Thumna* or *Sisawm*. They were the married daughters or sisters of a householder. The *Tanupi* is also called *Tuampi* because she is the principal wrapper of the corpse when her maternal parents passed and the *Tanu Nau* is called *Tuamnau* because she is next in wrapping the dead.¹²

The longevity of the practice was commented by Shakespear as a “disgusting performance [that] goes for a month or more according to the social position of the deceased.”¹³ Could it be that Shakespear was ignorant of the preparations needed for the burial, or that he literally

felt the practice disgusting? Aside the preparations needed for the burial, there was also a belief among the people regarding the longevity of keeping the corpse. N. Gouzanang writes that it was a belief among the people that retention of the corpse meant the family as a whole remained complete. Burying the dead meant the complete separation of the dead and the living. Moreover, it was also regarded that those families who bury their dead hastily were seen as not having any affection for the same during its lifetime.¹⁴

After necessary requirements were met and all its relatives from other villages arrived, the time for burial was discussed over again. Before actual burial, a ceremony called *Langkhen* was performed where the deceased' *Pu* literally beats the bier.¹⁵ The ceremony was performed to every grandson who lived separately from their parental house and *Pu* slaughtered a barrow on the day. At the same time, the *Pu* could not beat the bier unless he contributed the barrow.¹⁶ However, *Pu* took *Gunman* only to his eldest and youngest grandson. *Gunman* is the property of the deceased, a tinder-box, a spear or a knife, which the *Pu* is obliged to take; if the spear was chosen, the same was planted in the front yard of the house in the evening and from where the *Pu* would take.¹⁷

The corpse was placed to sit on the bier with *Akgesawm* placed on its head. Another ceremony was performed before actual burial took place which was called *Kosah*, a mortuary feast. The bereaved family had to bear one quadruped for the feast, a gayal or a barrow and members of their *Inndongta* one barrow each. The feast was organized in order to please the spirit of the dead while at the same time it was believed that the slaughtered animals would become the herd of the

deceased in the afterlife.¹⁸ Apart from these animals, a piglet was slaughtered where the hepatic meat and the colon was placed in both the palm of the dead, known as *Sasin tawi*; the meat that was placed in the left palm was for the person whom the deceased first met when it reached *Misi khua*, obviously for *Sahnu* who was the gatekeeper of the abode of the dead and the other one was for its family.¹⁹ Only after *Sasin tawi* was done can the mortuary feast be partaken.

When it was dusk, the dead body was carried out from its house with the bier to the grave, *Khul*.²⁰ The grave was gunshot with a blank fire in order to drive out evil spirits that was assumed to disturb the dead.²¹ Then burial took place. The *Thallouh*²² with the help of other *Inndongta* members placed the corpse in the grave. After burial was done, a branched-wooden pole was erected on top of it where the *Akgesawm*, the heads of the animals slaughtered in *Kosah* and a roasted chicken and gourd bottle kept in a bag were placed.

The following day was observed as *Siatvat ni* or *Handal ni*, where members of the *Inndongta* and relatives of the family organized beer drinking and make fence around the burial site. There is a believe that the soul of the deceased did not leave for *Misi khua* until the next full moon after burial and used to visit its house for food and drink. As such, on behalf of the family, the *Tanupi* of their *Inndongta* would take up the responsibility of offering food in a basket and a bottle of beer near the pole in the middle of the house, known as *Sutpi*. The food and drink kept for the soul was known as *Si-ansiah* and was replaced with a new one every morning. When it was full moon another ceremony was organized in order to mark the end of funeral process. The

ceremony was known as *Silouh paih* where members of *Inndongta* brought pots of beer and ceremonial drinking was held. Glutinous rice was cooked for the ceremony and it was called *Khen an*, the food of separation, as it was believed that the departing soul ate with them. *Silouh paih* marked the eternal separation between the dead and the living and the soul departed for *Misi khua*.²³

In addition to the usual funeral tradition of the people, there were certain traditions that marked difference in the social position of the deceased. For a commoner, the usual way of practice was followed while for a person who was socially eminent in the society there were additional practices. There was no *Langkhen* and *Gunman* for women but they were also carried in a bier. In a predominantly patriarchal society, recognizing the deeds of men was obvious and as such it was reflected in the burial practice. The items placed in *Akgesawm* for an eminent man was more than that of the average. For the same man, a particular dance called *Silap Lam* was performed on the day of burial. It can be considered as the highest honor given to a person who performed *Tawn*, killed big animals in game hunt and other deeds required for a person to be above average. The dance represented the social position of the person by meaning which the person was lifted or raised with the bier and carried around the house. The village priest led the dance group, followed by those who beat gongs, the dancers and then the singers. Gunshots were fired, drums and gongs were beaten and everyone in the village witnessed the event. It was said that Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, saw the dance in 1947 and remarked that it was an awe-inspiring dance and wanted to do the same on his death.²⁴

As in other social events, the role of *Inndongta* on death event was very important. There were different roles and positions guided by the norms of the organization for each member and they were obliged to perform the expected roles. Each household in a Paite village had an *Inndongta* of their own and this organization was formed for the welfare of the household. Mention has been made in bits regarding the roles of the members of the organization, for instance, the role of *Pu*, *Thallouh*, and *Sisawm* among others.

Apart from these social aspects of funerary practice, death and the rituals performed has cultural significance. Since death marked the separation of social members, utmost care was taken for the corpse and the soul itself. It was everyone's effort to make the soul content as well as the spirits that might disturb the soul when it made its way to the abode of the dead. The act of blank firing the grave itself was done in order to cast away evils spirits who were supposedly present inside the grave. The meat kept in its palm was to please *Sahnu* so that it could enter the abode of the dead undisturbed. For the most part, it is true that the belief system of the people guided their actions toward death, so also in any social event and even in their everyday lives.

The enormous consumption of beer and the numerous numbers of animals slaughtered was something that is lavishing. The social position of families differed from one another; the richer families easily afforded to offer meat and drinks abundantly while the poorer families could hardly afford the required offerings but still wanted to perform offerings. At the same time, death may occur at during weeding, harvesting or any time of cultivation. In this case,

it was obvious that the bereaved family would be lagging behind other households, not to mention the members of their *Inndongta*. In congruence to the condition faced by any bereaved family, the function of *Inndongta* came herein in such a way that members of the organization would contribute beers and animals required for performing different ceremonies and assisted the family in their cultivation. Thus, proper burial ceremony could be performed by any household.

In recapitulation, the funeral tradition of the Paites is a long process requiring elaborate multi-day ceremonies performed by the family and relatives of the dead. What is remarkable about the practice is the norm of reciprocity that guided the socio-cultural and economic life of the people, and for that matter the role of *Inndongta*.

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- ³ M. Thawngzanang, *Pupua Tawndan: Akgesawm Lenna*, Author, Central Lamka, 2006, pp. 26-28.
- ⁴ *Inndongta* is an institution prevalent among the Paites which is an organized institution formed at the household level comprising of agnates, affines, enates and other selected non-clan members within a village, with roles and obligations apportioned to them. For more details, see H. Kamkhenthang, *The Paites: A Transborder Tribe of Burma and India*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1988.
- ⁵ Tribal Research Institute, *Paite in Mizoram*, 2nd Impression, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 2011, p. 107.

- ⁶ Gouzanang, *op.cit.*, p. 81.
- ⁷ Two types of songs are generally sung during attending a wake for the dead: *Simai La* and *Lakawi La*. These songs are sung only on occasions of death and the person to start the song and beat the drum must be offered a cup of beer to do the same.
- ⁸ Gouzanang, *op.cit.*, p. 79.
- ⁹ *Ham* is an institution more or less similar to men's dormitory. Unlike the Mizo *Zawlbuk* or the Naga *Moring* that has separate house specifically for men's dormitory, the Paites have no such separate house constructed. In every Paite village, either inside the chief's house or in the house of some big man in the village, a separate place is consecrated near the hearth for men in the village to spend the night. Depending on the size of the village, there can be two or more such house. Eligible males in the village would come to these particular houses to spend the night. They are known as *sawm* or *sawm giak*, as in the act of being a *sawm* and the house in which they are *sawm* is known as *sawm inn*, house of the *sawm*.
- ¹⁰ L. Nengkhopau Ngaihte, *Paite Pupa Ngeina leh Tawndan Suina*, Young Paite Association Vengnuam South Unit, Central Lamka, 2009, p. 3.
- ¹¹ Gouzanang, *op.cit.*, p. 80.
- ¹² There are instances where argument can arise between the sister and daughter of a man who passed. For the sister, the deceased is her brother and she feels obliged and honorable to wrap her brother's body and the daughter also feels the same since the deceased is her father.
- ¹³ Shakespear, *The Lushei-Kuki Clans*, 3rd Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 2008, p. 142.
- ¹⁴ Gouzanang, *op.cit.*, p. 81.
- ¹⁵ G. Chinzam in discussion with the author, September 2017.
- ¹⁶ Kamkhenthang, *op.cit.*, p. 199.
- ¹⁷ Gouzanang, *op.cit.*, p. 7.
- ¹⁸ Kamkhenthang, *op.cit.*, pp. 196-197.
- ¹⁹ Gouzanang, *op.cit.*, p. 87.
- ²⁰ There are two types of burial practices: *Dakvui*, here burial can be done only after *Kosah* is done, and *Kunvui*, burial of infant under the floor of the house. *Kunvui* is performed in a simple way; the corpse is wrapped in a shroud and is buried with broken beer pots.
- ²¹ T. Vungkholian Guite.
- ²² *Thallouh* is the eldest brother or any paternal uncle of a householder's *Inmdongta*.
- ²³ Gouzanang, *op.cit.*, p. 94.
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NURSING AND ITS RELATED PRACTICES AMONG THE MIZO IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Samuel V.L. Thlanga

“...A nurse is not about the pills or charting. It’s about being able to love people when they are at their weakest moments.”

Anonymous

Protecting and promoting physical and mental health for patients and for the larger community are the focuses of nursing care. Nurses attempt to calm and make patients feel physically and emotionally comfortable by listening to their concerns and explaining procedures of treatments. According to Susan de Wit and Patricia Williams, “It is the responsibility of every nurse to promote better health by informing patients of things such as illness prevention methods, safe health practices and healthy lifestyle choices.”¹

The art and science of modern nursing encompasses fundamental nursing concepts that include health, illness, stress and health promotion. Nurses work with physicians and other medical staff in a wide variety of medical and

community settings. They provide preventive, primary, acute and chronic care for sick and injured patients with health information, restorative care, medication administration and emergency care.

According to M. Louise Fitzpatrick, “The term “nurse” finds its root in the womanly attribute of nurturance. In the eighteenth century nursing became associated with prison reform and the era of social consciousness in England and Germany. Through Elizabeth Gurney Fry in England and the establishment of a hospital and training program for deaconesses at Kaiserwerth, Germany, organized nursing began. Kaiserwerth was responsible for influencing Florence Nightingale, under whose leadership a new era in nursing emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. Nightingale initiated major reforms in hospital management and revolutionized the care of the sick by training nurses in a systematic way under secular auspices. Despite formidable opposition, she was able to demonstrate that improved nurse training improved the standards of care. She believed that education for nursing practice and the provision of nursing care were two distinct functions, and therefore, she established an independent training school controlled by a school committee and financed separately from St. Thomas Hospital. In Nightingale’s view, nursing education was more than apprenticeship under the aegis of the hospital. She coined the term ‘health nursing’, which encompassed care of the potentially ill as well as those already infirm. The Nightingale system of education upgraded nursing and distinguished the trained nurse from untrained caretakers of the sick. But it also reinforced values of the religious orders and the regimentation of the military through the promulgation of rules and regulations for nurses. Although frequently romanticized and distorted, the experience of the

Crimea earned Nightingale a reputation for organizational ability, as evidenced by her role of chief architect of the military medical system in Great Britain. She also designed the health-care system in India. McBride notes that “nursing, like women in general, has been deprived of its own history...” and suggests that the feminist, self-confident nurse would be better off if she acknowledged that she intended to follow the Nightingale example. The Nightingale model of independent training schools for nurses was transferred to the United States but was short-lived because of an inability to raise endowment for this system of nursing education. Ashley, in *Hospital Paternalism and the Role of the Nurse*, clearly documents the symbiotic relationship that developed as a consequence of the need for individuals to staff hospitals and the need to find a place in which nursing training could be housed. The economy of hospitals came to depend on the nurse-training programs that proliferated in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In most instances large numbers of pupils were recruited several times a year and apprenticed to the few graduate nurses employed by the institution.”²

Late 19th and early 20th Century medical facilities in Mizoram

The first known medical aid facility provided to non-military people in Mizoram was when a tent was built in Aizawl in 1894 to provide health care facility to laborers which was later converted into a dispensary with a few emergency beds in 1896.³ From 1896 to 1920 seven dispensaries (known as Travelling Dispensaries), with five to six emergency beds each, came up at different interior places throughout the Lushai Hills. These (Travelling) dispensaries were located at Champhai, Kolasib, Sairang, North Vanlaiphai, Sialsuk, Tlabung and Tuipang.⁴ In 1947,

two hospitals, one in Aizawl (with 36 indoor beds) and the other in Lunglei had been established.⁵

Despite the late arrival of the colonial rulers in the region, modern health care system reached Mizoram quite early. It started in the year 1894 with a tent that provided medical aids to the general public which later became health dispensary. Within the next couple of decades seven other dispensaries were started in the remote and interior places within the state. And two full-fledged hospitals had been established in the next 30 years. Establishments of these health care facilities within a few years gave the Mizos more avenues in nursing and other medical activity engagements.

Mizos in nursing and its related services

D. Ṭhianga, working as a 'Dresser' in 1905 and later promoted as Compounder was one of the first known Mizo medical aid workers, working under the government.⁶ Lianchuhthangi, popularly known as Pi Pawngi was the first 'Midwife' qualified among the Mizo. She successfully completed midwifery in 1908 from Calcutta's Lady Dufferin's Hospital and was employed as a Nurse the same year in Aizawl Hospital.⁷ After Pawngi, Laithangvungi completed Nursing & Midwifery in 1922. Tlawmkungi & Kaithuami completed Nursing course during 1921-1924 from Robert's Hospital, Shillong.⁸

During the First World War, besides the two thousand plus Mizo men who joined the labour corps, thirty Lushai young men joined the 8th Army Bearer Corps, also known as the St. John's Ambulance Corps of which seven of them gave their lives "for the king and country".⁹ The 'Lusheis'

stood out in all their undertakings, and excelled in work or in dance. They received praise from their superiors as hard workers, good dancers, and *adept nursers* of the sick.¹⁰ J.H. Lorrain, one of the pioneer Christian Missionaries who joined the Mizo young men in the war as a chaplain and an interpreter recorded that had the government not fixed the standard of height many more would have gone. The Mizo young men reported the war from Lucknow where they were given training.

Pratap Chhetri in his *“North East and the First World War”* also writes about the participation and contributions of the Mizos during the First World War in the following words:

“It is interesting to note that in 1915 two years prior to the birth of the Lushai Labour Corps, a group of 30 young Lushais somehow joined the 8th Army Bearer Corps and went to Mesopotamia. One among them was Lance Havildar Lalhema who received a Mention-in-Dispatches for his bravery and this commendation was signed by none other than Winston Churchill, who was at that time, the War Secretary. Seven of these men reportedly perished. Their names too, are inscribed on the War Memorial in Aizawl.”¹¹

On the Church front, Nu-i, who studied with the missionaries from a very young age went to Kolkata on 6th December 1905 to study ‘medicine’¹², but one cannot trace much about her accomplishments. The first Christian Missionary medical practitioner in Mizoram was Dr. Peter Fraser, who came to Mizoram in 1908 and left in 1912. During his stay, a dispensary was built in 1910 in Aizawl with corrugated iron and plastered walls and this was the first dispensary established by the mission in Mizoram. When Dr. Fraser left Mizoram, Compounder D. Thianga was put

in charge of the dispensary.¹³ The Welsh medical missionary next to Dr. Fraser, (1908-1912) was Dr. John Williams, who arrived on 22nd Feb. 1928 and started Nursing School in the same year. Tlawmkungi was the first nursing student at Durtlang Nursing school and continued to work at the Synod Hospital till 1936. Winifred Margaret (Pi Hmangaihi), the first Welsh missionary Nurse arrived Durtlang on 7th January, 1929 and went back in 1935. Eirlys Williams, also known by the Mizos as Pi Sangi (1933); Gladys M Evans called Pi Hruaii by the Mizos (1936); May Bounds (1954) worked as Missionary Nurses at Synod Hospital, Durtlang.¹⁴

The first Baptist Mission Society medical missionary to Mizoram was E.O. Dick (Pi Dawki), a qualified nurse who came to Serkawn in 1919. E.M. Oliver (Pi Zoduhi), another missionary nurse, joined her in 1922.¹⁵ E.O. Dick opened Nursing School and trained the following Mizo Nurses: Lalsiami (1919), Lamchhingi (1920), Aibangi (1 9 2 1) , Lianchami (1922), Rochhumi (1928), Lianthuami (1928), Khuangkungi (1930).

The Mizo nurses, both in the government and missions proved to be worthy of compliments as they became very supportive and hence indispensable to both the government hospitals and missions'. At the same time employment of Mizo women as nurses and other health-care givers, elevated the position of women in the society¹⁶ as they became a part of a few salaried elites in the society. However, Mizo men who were in the related services did as good as the womenfolk, if not better. Mr. D. Thianga, who initially was in the government service and became the first medical-compounder, joined the Christian Medical Mission and

became in-charge of the mission's dispensary after Dr. Peter Fraser left Mizoram in 1912. Mr. D. Thianga's role as the sole caretaker of the dispensary until the arrival of Dr. John Williams in 1928 clearly depicts the competency and capability of Mizo men in providing health-care and medical-aid. Excellences of Mizo men in delivering medical aid services during the wars and praises received from their superiors as hard workers, and "adept nurses" of the sick reveal how the Mizo men are proficient in nursing and its allied services. The "commendation" of Lance Havildar Lalhema with "Mention in the Despatches" (MiD), immensely enhanced the mark that the Mizo men can, in any situation, skillfully accomplish their mission in giving care and aids to those who are in need. As briefly discussed and narrated above, it can be confidently concluded that both Mizo men and women, whether in war or in peace, can always be relied upon and are second to none in providing and facilitating medical aids and health-care proficiencies.

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THE CONTINUITY OF *RAMHUAL* IN PAWI-LAKHER AUTONOMOUS REGION¹: CHANGES AND LIMITATION

Joseph K. Lalfakzuala

The transfer of power from colonial to post colonial state in the then Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was much cordial and not drastic as compared to the Mizo District influenced by the Mizo Union. In Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (PLAR), though the institution of chiefs was replaced by village council as witnessed in the whole district, the nature of transfers of political authority from the chief to the village council had not much to do with the discontentment of the social and political forces of the Lai and the Mara against their chief's system as a whole. In fact, to a certain extent, it was the chiefs' lineage that had had the privilege to take over the political authority which led to mere institutional change. Particularly among the Lai community, in the course of field study, most of the political leaders engaged were the descendent of the chief's clan/tribe².

When the working of the District Council has been studied, particularly of the period of the then PLRC (Pawi-Lakher Regional Council), the PLRC (Revenue Assessment) Regulation, 1956 do capture the thought due to the continuity of *ramhual*. The institution otherwise had been highly contested in the larger political process of Mizo Hills where the Mizo Union influence had been prevalent. This is because *ramhual* had been considered as land privilege in the earlier society as they had the liberty of choosing jhum land prior to the commoners. Therefore, brief analysis will be made on the nature of continuity of *ramhual* in PLAR to understand the implication and the limitation of its application under the new democratic structure.

Background

Mizo hills, at the dawn of India's independence had witnessed the rise of the political forces against the colonial government and its legacy. If one looks at the analytical debate of the Mizo Union against the colonial government, it was deeply embedded on the character of the legacy instituted in the institution of the chiefs. The institution of chiefs during colonial period was different from the pre-colonial time, not much in term of dominance and control, but in the degree of autonomy of the chief's institution. The Chief institution was subdued and legitimised to be sub-ordinate to the colonial master and it really did serve as full convenient for the hill administrations³. In the process of colonialism, the institution of chiefs' transform itself to the 'well wisher' of the Government from the traditional responsibility of the welfare of the village. Here, it would be wrong to be vindictive on the chiefs because the chiefs' who were nevertheless hesitate to be punished by the colonial

official had they disobeyed. Their position depends on the contentment of the district Superintendent, who dare to disobey?

The institution of the chief had been jeopardised by colonialism and their continuity depend on the recognition of the colonial government; on the other end, the chief had faced the contradiction within the society from the rising social forces which turn into political forces under the Mizo Union at the dawn of Independence.⁴ While the chiefs had gained legitimacy rights from the colonial government, it slowly lost the people's (commoners) allegiances. Though there were social and religious factors attached to the losing of allegiance, one particular factor which can be uniformly attributed to chief's dominance was on the land administration, which cannot be delinked from the administration of justice. On the social and religious realm, the chief had little control, if no control, as these processes were influenced by the European Christian missionaries. Land is where the chief had retained full control and dominance in the village, recognised by the Government.

It was no wonder when land privileges were introduced, with high degree of modification, on the royalty who can enjoy such position. Earlier, the acceptability of the land privilege had been limited to the *khawnbawl upa* (chief's councillor) by virtue of their being inherent part of chief's administration. But with the addition of two categories i.e., *Zalen* and *Ramhual*, the control on the land had been enhanced and also the influence over the society had been

extended. With the former, it had been explained, mostly implies the close relations of the chief, otherwise the *Upa* were also being included in some cases. They were not bound to pay any form of taxes or dues to the chief, but they had to lender help the chief when the need arises. The latter, *ramhual*, was formalised in such a way that they were bound to pay at least double the amount of *fathang* (paddy tax) on the condition that they will chose jhum land prior to the commoners. It implies that better jhum site will be chosen by the *ramhual* and in return they had to pay higher *fathang* than the commoners.⁵

Here, the point of contestation on *ramhual* was the privilege to choose the best jhum site and they were considered as land privileges. There were also alternative narratives on the position of the *ramhual*, as their being land privilege was with condition to fulfilled the demand of the chiefs. I will not go deeper into the analysis of this narrative.

The centrality of land in traditional structure of Mizo society made the institution of the chiefs the centre of contestation with the rise of 'democratic' movement. This of course is nothing sort of unique if one looks into the entrant of the democracy in the tribal society, some African countries in particular, which still witness the 'compromise' of democracy with the recognition of the traditional institution by the modern state⁶. The same persist with the neighbouring North East states where chiefs and other traditional institutions still exist and are given legitimacy by the Constitution but the state society interface is never cordial⁷. Looking into the functions of

the chiefs and other traditional authorities where it still exists, land is where they have possessed control and dominance by virtue of customs and traditions which otherwise is not contested.

Application and implication of *Ramhual* under Regional Autonomy

In the context of Mizo hills, with India's independence, the authority of the chiefs on land had been strategically subdued through a 'democratic mean' by abolishing land privileges, *ramhual* in particular. The regeneration of any form of land privileges had been prevented by continuous attack on Chief system that ultimately led to the 'abolition' of chief system in Mizo society, through the legislation of the post colonial democratic State. Though I will avoid this argument, still it can problematize the 'abolition' of chiefs' rights act on the ground, do the legislative assembly has the rights to abolish. As in the case of other states of the North East, the traditional institutions and traditional authorities have been institutionalised as part of the state process and have been rejuvenated for the village governance and also for administration of justice.

With the abolition of the rights and privileges of the chief, not only the privilege enjoyed by the chiefs had been compensated and abolished, they legacy to appoint land privileges had been subdued and taken over by the new democratic institution. But, in the Mizo Autonomous District, though they authorised themselves to select land privileges no such incident had been witnessed. On the contrary, in the context of Pawi Lakher Autonomous Region,

the PLRC like the Mizo District Council authorised themselves with such authority, included *ramhual* to be part of their revenue assessment process. PLRC entrusted the village council as the authority to select *ramhual* within their village. As such, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (Revenue Assessment) Regulation, 1956 (under Section 4 & 5) dealt with the paddy tax to be paid by each tribal family to the PLRC.

The regulation avoids using the traditional term ‘fathang’ used the term *Regional Buhchhun* to be more inclusive. Moreover, the used of the terms ‘tolls on persons’ seem to indicate family or household because *jhum* site was distributed on the basis of family. While Section 4 aggregate the amount of paddy to be paid by each household within the region. First, four tins for every household who engage in wet cultivation or shifting *jhum* cultivation. Second, if the family is not engaged in paddy cultivation it has to pay Rs. 2/- per year. Third, showing compassion to the family who cannot produce to feed his family for six months, he can choose to paid in amount Rs 2 in lieu of 4 tins. Here an important argument that lingered was the nature of toll levied on the family engaged in shifting cultivation and the family engaged in wet cultivation. Each had to pay the same amount of paddy toll. Also, the paragraph of the section exempted the non-tribal government official living in the government quarter. It created more confusion in the nature of classification of person exempted from the toll. One indication that signified by the section was that all the tribal living in the region have to pay toll including the government servant whether they lived in the

government quarter or not, the non tribal has to pay the toll unless they are government official living in the government quarter.

While Section 5 of the regulation made a categorization on the number of *ramhual* in the village. The categorization is as follows:

- 1) Village having below 30 houses – 2 *ramhual*
- 2) Village having between 31-50 houses – 3 *ramhual*
- 3) Village having between 51-70 houses – 4 *ramhual*
- 4) Village having between 71-90 houses – 5 *ramhual*
- 5) Village having 91 above houses – 6 *ramhual*

According to the regulation, the maximum number of *Regional Buhchhun* payable by the *Ramhual* will be sixteen tins of paddy and the minimum will be 4 tins per years. This amount or quantity has to be calculated in such a way that it has to be ‘over and above the toll levied under Section 4’ of the regulation. That means that each *Ramhual* has to pay at least a minimum of 4 tins above the normal toll of 4 tins paid by each household. As such, the *ramhual* will be given priority in choice of jhum land “in the order of the amount bids offered by them and accepted by the Village Council or the Executive Committee as the case may be” (Sub Section (iii) of Section 4).

Section 4 and Section 5 of the PLRC (Revenue Assessment) Regulation, 1956 need a serious engagement as the notion of fathang and the privilege inherited in the choice of jhum land through institution of *ramhual*. This in the context of Mizo Autonomous District had been rigorously challenged and countered by the Mizo Union

since 1946 onward and then totally abolished⁸. In the case of Mizo District Council, the institution had been initially reduced drastically and eventually abolished even before the abolition of the rights of the chiefs. But in the context of PLAR the continuity of toll on land, particularly the continuity of *ramhual* had proved the point that the transition of power from the traditional authority to the new political leadership in the then Pawi Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was peaceful. On the other hand, it also shows that it was the only form of institutional transformation in which the chiefs and its associate captured the new institution PLRC, in fact, led the people to the post independence transformation.

With the introduction of PLRC, it was the duty and function of the council to generate its own revenue through various forms of taxes, tolls, etc. The PLRC (Revenue Assessment) Regulation 1956 was also framed to generate and regulate various sources of revenue and the revenue from the jhum land had been further limited after the reduction of *fathang* in 1953 (The PLAR (Reduction of Fathang) Act, 1953). While tax was mostly generated in the form of cash, the continuity of tolls on paddy in kind named as *Regional Buhchhun* become problematic in nature. The regulation of 1956 and the subsequent amendments did not mention on how the *Buhchhun* will be utilised. In particular, what added the problem was the continuity of *Ramhual* because it was unclear up to what extent will it serve the purpose under the new democratic institution. Under PLRC, the differences on the nature of selection of *ramhual* as compare to the chiefs were the selector. Otherwise the intention did not differ. The continuity of the institution itself denoted privileges

on jhum land was continued by the PLRC and the degree of exploitation that can be incurred can be hardly differentiate from the traditional chief. Under the PLRC, either the village council or the executive council was the appointing authority. But, the regulation did not provide on how to select the bidder, particularly on how to solve the matter if there is conflict of interest.

The revenue assessment regulation of 1956 was amended thrice till 1959 but no clarification on *ramhual* was added. With the introduction of the Pawi Lakher Autonomous Region (Revenue Assessment) Regulation, 1963, all the existing regulation on revenue assessment had been repealed. Though the new regulation did not mention anything related to privilege on jhum land, Section 8 of the regulation was twisted in such a way that one can bid for jhumland with condition of paying fee. The section reads :

“choice of jhum for bidders shall be in the order of the amount of the bids offered by them and accepted by the Village Council.

Provided that the amount of bid offered shall, in no case, be less than Rs. 10/.”

Thus, the new regulation can be understood in such that only for the bidders, there should be fee of not less than Rs. 10 depending on the nature of the field. It did not mention any fee or toll related to the ordinary jhum cultivation, thus indicating that *Buhchhun* was not levied anymore or had stopped. And it was the power of the village council in selecting among the bidder. But, confusion lies

with the number of plots which can be offered within the village. Moreover, offering the best plot of land to the bidder or person having the capacity to pay can implies refusal of better jhum plot or land to ordinary people who otherwise do not have the amount to pay or the influence on the authority who authorised such activity.

With the existence of Pawi (Lai) Autonomous Council, a new revenue assessment regulation was passed in 1974 and came into force in the following years. The new regulation did not mention any form of revenue from jhum cultivation and the regulation repealed the earlier regulation of 1963. This implies that jhum has been regarded as inherent right of the tribal for their livelihood and existence. Distribution on jhum land is practiced by drawing lot as specified under jhum regulation act (Section 6 (2) of the Pawi Autonomous District (Jhum Regulation) Act, 1983).

On the other hand, the jhum regulation of the erstwhile PLAR prohibits any form of privilege on the choice of jhum land (section 5 of The Pawi-Lakher Region (Jhum) Regulation 1956.). But the same regulation gives power to the Regional Council to declare on this issue (appointing of land privileges) but it has to be in full sitting. The same power is given to the Autonomous Council when the new regulation was introduced under LADC (Section 5 of the Pawi Autonomous District (Jhum regulation) Act, 1983.). Moreover, the jhum regulation gives the final authority to the LADC on any issue related to the jhum cultivation. This has been the contested point between the village council and district council on the distribution of jhum land or any land, which is worth further study.

Conclusion

If the Jhum regulation of 1956 clearly indicated that any form of land privileges was prohibited in selection of jhum sites, then the question arises, for what reason *Ramhual* had been continued in PLAR. According to the regulation, the defence was to generate revenue, which was clear because not only the *Ramhual* but by the introduction of *Regional Buhchhun*, where each household/ family has to pay tax. But another question which incurred is the significance on the nature to generate revenue from the jhum cultivation, *Ramhual* in particular. Here, there is hardly any record to conclude on the significant of continuing *ramhual* for the society.

Though the paper is not designed to inquired deeply into the significant of the continuity, still the limitation of continuing such 'privileges' should be understood with the transferred of power from the traditional authorities to the new democratic institution of the state. First, the revenue assessment under the jhum was not to be based on the surplus generation because the whole tribal economy is based on subsistence which was even difficult to sustain the needs for their livelihood. It is no wonder with the discontinuity of such paddy tax since the formation of Lai Autonomous District Council.

Second and more importantly, the whole trajectory of the Regional Council separately for the Lai and the Mara had been connected with the political development of the then Mizo Hills. Though the continuity of *ramhual* in PLAR may have proven the absence of significant movement against the traditional institution(s) in Lai and Mara

inhabited areas, contrary to the areas influence by the Mizo Union. Here, it cannot be denied the significant of the political forces under the Mizo Union had deeply affected the PLAR at the institutional level because the region which had no strong enmity with their traditional authority relinquished the old system to enter into the new democratic system. Continuity of the traditional system of *ramhual* could not fit in under whole trajectory of the democratic process.

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ELECTORAL POLITICS BEFORE AND DURING THE MIZO DISTRICT COUNCIL IN MIZORAM

Paul Songhaulal Songate

Introduction

At the outset, I would like to mention that political consciousness of any nation cannot arrive from a vacuum. In fact, Mizo political consciousness began to emerge in the early 1920s during the time of N.E. Parry, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills.¹ N. E Parry was a very versatile and dynamic political officer of the Lushai Hills who made important social changes in the Mizo society. He involved deeply in the Mizo society and felt good the existence of Zawlbuk and wanted it to establish in every village in the Lushai Hills. He introduced common laws for all the chiefs of the Lushai Hills. In the process the people also felt that the powers of the chiefs were also to be gradually restricted and for this reason in 1926 they complained against the chiefs of Chhingchhip and Lungleng to N. E. Parry. After that political awakening took place among some educated class of the Mizo. The commoners believed that they needed change in the society to removed

autocratic regimes of the chiefs. So the best way out they envisaged was to join the Assam Council and for that some representatives were sent to Shillong to consult Local Advisers. When N.E. Parry the then Superintendent knew about the activities of these leaders, he kept some of them in the jail in 1927 which were the following. These people initiated political awakening in Mizoram.²

1. V. Z Zabiaka, a business man of Kulikawn
2. Saikunga, a business man of Kulikawn
3. Telela
4. Laldela, he was deported outside the Lushai Hills.

Electoral politics began to take shape in Mizoram during the time of M.C Cole, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills who wanted to bring some changes in dealing with the chiefs. In 1940 he convened chief conference at Thenzawl for choosing their representatives so that the Superintendent could meet these representatives in lieu of the chiefs as and when necessary.³ This was a step for the evolution of electoral politics in the Lushai Hill and the eventual establishment of representative democracy in Mizoram.

District Conference

A new chapter in the history of electoral politics was ushered in Mizoram when the then, Superintend of the Lushai Hills A. Macdonald initiated election of District Conference on January 16, 1946 at the Aizawl Play Ground. Mac Donald wanted to create a body which would be able to initiate decisions with the government and called it District Conference in which both the chiefs and the Commoners would have equal representatives through

election process. From within each Circle, the chiefs and the Commoners would have one each representative. In the Northern Circles 13 chiefs' representatives and 13 Commoners representatives were elected respectively. In the Southern region of Lunglei Headquarters, election of District Conference could not take place due to the boycott of the election by the Mizo Union. From Aizawl region also only a few participated in the election of District Conference as Mizo Union Boycotted the election and as such, only Zalen Party participated in the election of District Conference. This infuriated the Superintendent profusely.⁴

The elected members of District Conference began session immediately. The District Conference session disapproved some of the arbitrary powers of the chiefs. The arbitrary power of the chief to send away people from the villages was disapproved by this session. In this regard, the session decided to appoint the chiefs' elders who would decide people to be disbanded from the village by the chiefs. In this regard, the arbitrary power of the chief was curbed. Without the permission of this body the chiefs would have no power to send out any body from the village. The District Conference also submitted some petitions to the Advisory Sub-Committee by stating that if Mizoram was to be included within Assam, it should be given at least 3 MLAs in the Assam Legislative Assembly.⁵

Birth of Mizo Union

The District Conference had something to do with the birth of Mizo Union, the first political party in Mizoram. In the first meeting of District Conference, the then

Superintendent Mac Donald told the members that the land of the Lushai Hills belonged not to the chiefs but to all those who lived in the land. Since then some of the Mizo educated people believed that time had come for political party to be formed. Accordingly, Hrangia, Lalbuaia, V. Rosiama, R. Vanlawma and others intimated to Mac Donald on April 9, 1946 to get permission for the formation of political party. MacDonald agreed to establish political party on the same day when R. Vanlawma met him. Subsequently, April 9, 1946 was considered as the founding day of the Mizo Union party. Then, conference was summoned on April 25, 1946 at Aizawl M.E School and elected the following office bearers.⁶

- 1) President : Pachhunga
- 2) Vice President : Lalhema
- 3) General Secretary : R. Vanlawma
- 4) Treasurer : Thanga
- 5) Fin. Secretary : Lalhmingthanga.

It is to be noted that the Mizo Union from its establishment as political party up to 1970 played a remarkable role in Mizoram politics.

The Second District Conference election

The Superintendent A. MacDonald issued order for the election of District Conference on 9th April 1947 for Lungleh Areas and for Aizawl region 14th April 1947 respectively. In Aizawl region a few people from Zalen Pawl (Freedom Party) participated in the election as the Mizo Union boycotted the election. From the chiefs 13 members and from the commoners called Hnamchawm 13 members were elected for the District Conference. District Conference could not

survive beyond 1947 as the Mizo Union could not cooperate with the Council

In the meantime, the Mizo Union were concentrating for the arrival of the Constituent Advisory Sub Committee members. The Advisory Sub-Committee arrived at Aizawl on April 17, 1947. The next day at Thakthing Bazar near Lalbuaia residence they had public gathering with the members of Constituent Assembly Advisory Sub-Committee members. The then Assam Chief Minister Bordoloi told the people to join India as it was good for them. The Assam Ministers Nichol Roy and A. V. Thakar also supported the speech of Assam Chief Minister and encouraged the Mizo to join Assam. Lalmawia of Freedom Party and Zatluanga C. I were in favour of Mizoram joining Burma. Nichols Roy made a comparison by stating that joining Burma meant only deer fore leg but joining India meant possessing the whole of deer. The leaders of the Mizo Union submitted Memorandum to the Advisory Sub-Committee on 18th April 1947 by demanding Autonomous District Council for the Lushai Hills. ⁷

Advisory Council

This council was to put suggestions to the Assam Government regarding the power and jurisdiction of the district Council for the Lushai Hills. The Advisory Council would be comprised of the representatives of both the chiefs and the Commoners. Election should be as per the election law of Assam as prescribed in 1940. Election for the chief representatives was put forth on March 23, 1948 and for the Commoners was put forth on April 15, 1948 respectively.

And elections were conducted accordingly. Altogether, 10 chiefs' representatives were elected and 25 Commoners representatives were elected. Out of 25 Commoners Mizo Union secured 20 seats, United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) 2 seats and 3 seat from independents. This could be said the first body elected by the people to decide their future. The Council was to function as interim.⁸

When the first meetings of the Lushai Hills advisory Council was held on August 16, 1948 under the chairmanship of L.L. Peter, to discuss the draft rule for the constitution of Lushai Hiss District, the Mizo Union was not satisfied with the decisions as such, the party initiated agitation from December 28, 1948 in the Lushai Hills except in the Southern Region. The agitation was so intense that some of the leaders of the Mizo Union were sent to jail.⁹

The meeting of Advisory Council did not take place for a long period of time, so the then Superintendent Barkataki convened a meeting on February 11, 1950. The meeting discussed about the formation of District Council, the strength of the District Council, the timing of election, etc.

The First Mizo District Council election

The Assam government issued election date for the Mizo District Council on April 4, 1952 and election for MP and MLAs on April 5, 1952 respectively. The Assam government also dissolved Advisory Council on November 12, 1951. Hence, the first general election for the Mizo District Council was held in 1952. The Mizo District was allotted 3 seats in the then Legislative Assembly. 1 from Lunglei District and 2 from Aizawl District. Mizo Union

Party won 15 seat out of 18 constituencies. Following are the Composition of District Council during this term:¹⁰

- 1) Lalsawia : Chief Executive Member
- 2) F. Sangkunga : Executive Member
- 3) Chairman : Dr. Rosanga
- 4) Tuikhurliana : Deputy Chairman

The elections for MLAs and members of District Council were held on the same day on April 4, 1952. The following people were elected as NLAs.

- 1) Ch. Saprawnga of Mizo Union from Theiriat (Lunglei)
- 2) Thanhkira of M. U from Aizawl
- 3) R. Dengthuama of M U from Pukpui.

At the same time a new political development took place in the Mizo District in which R. Thanhkira was appointed as Member of Parliament in May 1952. The post of Superintendent was changed to Deputy Commissioner and then Superintendent Barkataki became the first Deputy Commissioner of the Lushai Hills.¹¹

The 2nd District Council election 1957

The 2nd District Council election took place on January 25, 1957. This election was contested by two parties, the Mizo Union party and the Zalen Party. There were 20 elected seats and two nominated seat. Mizo Union got 12 seat and Zalen Party secured 8 seats. Dr. Rosanga and Hmingliani were nominated members. Following were the composition of District Council;¹²

- 1) Ch. Saprawnga : Chief Executive Member
- 2) Executive Members : Dr. Rosanga and
Tuikhurliana

- 3) Chairman : V.L Tluanga
- 4) Deputy Chairman : C. Pahlira.

The 2nd District Council had a strong opposition party as such the session was noted for lively debate. K.C Lalvunga of Zalen Party moved “no-confidence motion” against the government. After a lengthy debate the motion was put to vote and was defeated.

The 3rd Mizo District Council election 1962

The 3rd District Council election was held on February 5, 1962. At this time the Mizo Union was struggling for statehood. In this election, the Mizo Union came to power again with thumping majority. Accordingly, the composition of the District Council were such as Ch. Saprawnga as C.E.M, H.K. Bawichhuaka as Chairman, C. Pahhlira as Deputy Chairman, Lalbuaia and Hrangaia were Executive Members.

Along with District Council election, Assembly election was also held in the District in which 3 MLAs were elected all form Mizo Union party. These elected MLAs were Ch. Saprawnga, Ch. Chhunga and R. Thanhkira. Consequent upon this election, Ch. Saprawnga and Ch. Chhunga tendered their resignation from the District Council members and as such, new composition of District Council came into being which were as follows. ¹³

- 1) H. K. Bawichhuaka : C.E.M
- 2) C. Pahhlira and Hrangaia : Executive members
- 3) Lalbuaia : Member
- 4) V. Rosiama : Deputy Chairman.

The above Mizo political leaders continued to hold their office till 1970 as election could not take place due to declaration of Mizoram as disturbed area by the Government of India in 1966. The 4th District Council Election took place on April 23, 1970. By this time only Mizo Union and Congress fought for the election.¹³ The Mizo Union was hopeful to form government in the 4th general election, however, things turned unexpectedly and the Congress emerged as a winning party. As the District was uplifted to the status of Union Territory, ultimately Mizo District Council had to be dissolved.¹⁴

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MIZO PUAN – TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND RELEVANCE

Zoremsiami Pachuau

Introduction: the land and the people

Mizoram, the land of the Mizo covers an area of 21,081 Sq. Km. It lies in the southernmost part of North East India. Mountain ranges run through the north and the south, there are narrow and deep river valleys between the ranges. The state has innumerable rivers, streams and brooks. Mizoram has a pleasant climate and all kinds of tropical plants are found. The forests yield varieties of bamboos and timbers which serve as the basic raw materials for Mizo craft and technology.

The Mizo belong to the Tibeto-Burman group and the culture, prior to the British period was a primitive, non – literate culture, and the sources for information of the early days come from oral traditions, songs, myths, writings of the British personnel and the missionaries. Villages were built on top of a hill, one village consisted of 50-100 houses or a little bit more. The village was under a Chief and the chieftainship was hereditary. The Chief ruled with the help of a council of elders. Each village was expected to be self-sufficient in agriculture and handicrafts.

Importance of *Puan* in Mizo society

Puan is the original garment of the Mizo. In traditional society, women were expected to be expert in making *puan*. A *puan* is normally about a yard in length and from 44 inches to 54 inches in breadth. Handloom in Mizo society represents the rich cultural heritage. There is a *puan* for every occasion in Mizo society. *Puan* also represented the social hierarchy in the society. The traditional skill of making *puan* has become deeply rooted in the tribal consciousness and it has become one of the most important heritages in Mizo society. The technologies used were intricate and needed exceptional skill. All the materials needed for the production of *puan* were obtained from forests, indicating the tribe's closeness with nature that surrounds them.

Method and process of making yarn

Most Mizo planted cotton in the month of April. Sowing and harvesting usually took 6-8 months, depending on the condition of the soil and the weather. Great care has to be taken while harvesting. When it's time, cotton balls were carefully collected and dried in the sun. After they were thoroughly dried, the fibres were separated from the seeds using a homemade cotton gin called *herawt*. *Herawt* is a frame made of wood, which holds two rollers threaded at one end so that they roll in opposite direction. The ends of the rollers are carved into a screw which grooved into opposite way to the others. When the handle is turned, the cotton is drawn between them, the seeds then being squeezed out.¹ The cotton is then carded by means of bow composed of a tight curved piece of cane connected at both ends by a thin cane string², which is called *lasai*. The cotton is teased by *lasai* four/five times to make it fluffy white.

The cotton is then worked by hand into rolls a few inches long, whence it is spun into the spindle of a rough spinning wheel...³. The Mizo called this spinning wheel *hmui* where the spindle is turned by a big wheel by using ropes which pull them together in a wide loop. *Hmui* is made of wood and cane where the cotton is spun into fine threads. The wheel is much bigger than the spindle and the spindle itself is made to turn at good speed. The weaver feeds the fluffy cotton roll into the spindle and turns the wheel. One cotton roll is tied to another so the spinning goes on and on. After spinning the desired amount, the weaver takes out the yarn easily.

The yarns are then winded into skein by using *ladinlek*. *Ladinlek* is a piece of wood which is sharpened at both ends like a pencil. Holes are made below each of the sharpened point of the stick and then thin pieces of bamboo are inserted through these holes⁴. The cotton yards are then spun in the *ladinlek*, when it is full, the thin bamboos inserted are pulled out and thus, a skein is made.

The cotton skeins are naturally white so, they could produce only white *puan* called *puango*. They did not have in the beginning any use of coloured yarn and so the cloth produced used to be a simple thick white piece for both male and female.⁵ In course of time they discovered that certain barks, roots, herbs and leaves could yield different colours, like black, red, yellow and blue⁶. They collected the materials needed for dyeing, boiled them in water with the threads and added ashes to retain fastness. The threads are then taken out of the dye. It is left in the sun to soak. After this it is wrung out and hung up in the sun to dry. The process

is repeated three times, unless the cloth is dipped three times the dye will not be fast and lasting⁷.

The skeins were usually boiled with rice water so as to make them starchy. After that they were hung out in *lazar* to dry. *Lazar* is a bamboo pole supported by two upright posts which is made for drying the hank of the thread. A large stick is placed between the hanks of the thread⁸. The skeins were combed out while wet by using a comb made of dried fruit with points (*pandanus*) for a free flowing look.

The skein is then fitted into a *suvel* in order to make a ball of yarn. *Suvel* is a revolving tool with four extendable arms around which skein of cotton yarn is put for making the yarn into balls around a small stone. It is made of wood and bamboo having a stand of its own.⁹ The skeins are thus made into warp and weft thread, ready for weaving.

Weaving

The technique of Mizo weaving required patience and time. Weaving was done by women. It was compulsory for all the women to learn the art of weaving. The Mizo wove cloth in the same way as is common to the region; this method being called the Indonesian Tension-Loom system.¹⁰ Superficially, the Lushai loom appears easy to handle, but considerate practice is necessary to ensure equality in dimensions and regularity of design.¹¹ In the main, loin loom consists of few pieces of stout bamboo and timber rods of varying thickness, their length in all cases being normally about forty five inches.¹² Two strong nails are fixed up on the inner batten of the wall at the distance of normally three feet, mostly two feet above the floor. Two loops are made of

strong ropes which were put on each nail. A strong wooden rod is placed on these looped ropes. The weaver sits on the floor with a small wooden rod before her which is securely tied with a leather strap from her back on both sides. The weaver sits between this leather and the loom, adjusting her position. While another person prepares the warp by passing the thread around the two wooden rods, the weaver separated the odd and even sets of thread with the help of another thread. In this way, appropriate measure of texture is formed and the odd set of thread becomes cross-wire against the even sets with a space between them where the weft goes through. Different shapes and sizes of bamboos are placed between the two rods that enabled the weaver to weave, and drops of water are added occasionally in the interlaced yarn to make it stronger. The woof is passed through by means of prepared spindles, and is battened firmly down by the use of a smooth, and comparatively weighty, blade of polished wood, usually of sago palm.¹³ The material thus produced is *puan*.

Types of *puan* and their social relevance

In earlier times, *puan* was the only garment that the Mizo worn both for the men and women. The common *puan* was made of white cotton which could be worn all the time. It was called *puanngo*. In course of time, *puan* used by men and women began to differ. The following are the more important *puan* in *Lusei* society which displayed social relevance and significance.

- 1) ***Thangchhuah puan*:** This *puan* had a very high social significance and can be worn only by those who earned *thangchhuah* which could be attained by two ways. One

was by giving a series of feasts of merit in a prescribed order, which only very rich people could perform as it involved killing of a lot of cattle. Another way was by killing prescribed wild animals – bear, wild boar, stag, wild gayal, wild deer.¹⁴ The killing of these animals required exceptional skill which only a few possessed. After attaining *thangchhuah*, the *thangchhuah* person and his wife could wear the specially made *puan* which is bigger than others and which displayed a high social value.

- 2) ***Tawhlloh puan***: This *puan* could be worn only by a very courageous warrior for his bravery, and was held in high esteem. The name itself literally means ‘to stand firm’ which shows courage. It was as a garment worn by a brave person, who would not retreat from any kind of danger.¹⁵
- 3) ***Pawndum***: *Pawndum* has a very deep cultural significance and it is indeed one of these few traditional *puans* which still retains its cultural hallow to a very large extent even today.¹⁶ It is compulsory for every girl to possess one when she gets married. The possession of *pawndum* by the newly married girl was so conceived as it was culturally linked with one of her very sacred duties namely to provide a distinctive cover for the dead body of her husband if per chance the husband met his death during her life time.¹⁷
- 4) ***Ngotekherh***: *Ngotekherh* was a highly prized traditional *puan* and in the early days, it was worn by only well to do families.

- 5) ***Puanchei***: Perhaps the most beautiful and most colourful *puan* is *puanchei*. This is almost invariably an item of their marriage outfit besides its being the most commonly used costume on their festive dances.¹⁸ It was every girls dream to own it and even today, it still holds its place of importance as it did so many years ago.

Conclusion

Apart from the above mentioned *puan*, there are several other *puan* with different designs which were less significant in the cultural aspect. There are other beautiful designs such as *Di sul*, *Herhsawp*, *Fanghma Mu*, *Sawhthing Par*, *Kawkpui Zikzial* and many others. Today, even though there are better techniques to weave *Puan* that produces in large quantity, it is truly worth to mention that the traditional style is still very much in practice by many Mizo women, thereby producing their own *Puan*. The making of *puan* required time, skill, and an eye for detail that clearly showed the artistic skill of Mizo women. All motifs, symbols and designs which adorned *puan* are influenced by nature, which showed their close association with their environment.

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MIZO LEH VAI CHANCHINBU AND KRISTIAN TLANGAU AS SOURCES OF HEALTH CARE IN COLONIAL MIZORAM

Zothanpuui

This paper is an attempt to study the history of health care among the Mizos derived from two publications in vernacular during the colonial period - *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu*, and *Kristian Tlangau*. Based on these two sources, the paper will highlight the Mizo responses to modern medicine and health care, whether of resistance or acceptance as well as the opinions of western educated Mizos who projected their views and ideas through the print media. The manner in which both sources were instrumental in disseminating health care measures undertaken by both the colonial government and the civil society organizations then in vogue will also be focused upon.

The *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu* was a monthly newspaper in vernacular first published under the initiative of the colonial administration in 1903. Being the first and only

newspaper at the time, the news and articles that were published consisted of a wide range of subjects written not only the Mizos but by the non- Mizos as well. On the other hand, the *Kristian Tlangau* (initially *Krista Tlangau*) was first published in 1911 by the Welsh Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Aizawl. Being an organ of the Church it consists of articles essentially on religious aspects and the workings, developments and programmes of the Presbyterian Church. In the realm of health, we also occasionally comes across some brief articles on Mizo traditional medicines, and works done by civil society organizations which relates to various notifications of the Red Cross Committee and the efforts of the Young Lushai Association (YLA) now Young Mizo Association(YMA) in disseminating health care rules to the public on a wider scale.

From the early colonial period as the new administration embarked upon the task of imparting new policies, missionary endeavor in the hills followed almost simultaneously i.e., from the later part of the nineteenth century. In this respect, medical work became a necessary adjunct to the spread of Christianity. However, even as more and more Mizos were drawn to the Christian faith, relics of the past still had a tenacious hold on to their minds. The result was that the erstwhile beliefs that all diseases were the handiwork of evil spirits and that such an illness could be cured by propitiating the concerned spirit still persisted among some people. In fact, evil spirits were still blamed for the mere occurrence of a simple fever or a common cold. In this instance, we find the opinions of some mission educated Mizos coming to the fore who projected their views and ideas through the print media. For instance, in the June

issue of *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu*, 1905 Chuautea (who was the first ordained minister of the Baptist Church in the south hills) wrote an article contrary to the above mentioned notions of the Mizos regarding the causation of diseases and sickness that “We, the Mizos get sick not because of any other reason but because we are probably not wise enough, we are negligent of our health, we are too lazy, and that we lack self- control.” ¹

The assertions made by Chuautea may be true to an extent - especially his statement that the Mizos were negligent of their health for even by then, basic hygienic observances were still not given their due among the Mizos who had to be reminded time and again to take care of their health. It should however be noted that the said person was probably greatly influenced by the ideas of the mission enterprise and projected his views based on western concept of health care especially of the Christian missionaries who emphasized on cleanliness and hygienic living conditions but which vastly contradicted Mizo notion of health, beliefs and practices. It should be noted that the missionaries were quick to label Mizo traditional practices of medicine as ‘primitive’ ‘irrational’ and ‘superstitious’ with no hope of succor or survival for anyone who cared to practice it and the need to rectify such a condition.

In such instances, the need to educate the masses in matters of health care and cleanliness was done not only through oral means but also through writings by medical personnel and other educated Mizos which often appeared in the *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* and *Kristian Tlangau*. The fact that the concept of cleanliness still occupied back- stage

among the Mizos which was felt could be rectified by well-given advices can also be gleaned from an article in the *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, August 1904 by Leta Khiangte Khupchhung, a teacher then in Lunglei who asserted, "Among the Mizos if and when people see a clean and well-groomed person, he is often talked behind his back as being prim and proper, fastidious etc." ²

There were also many instances wherein non- Mizo medical doctors posted in the hills under the colonial administration and other health personnel contributed articles and took upon themselves the task of educating the masses as to the proper maintenance of health, how the Mizos could combat diseases and prevent themselves from being infected etc. In such writings, the Mizo traditional concepts of health and healing were often labeled as 'superstitious' which arose as a result of ignorance on the part of the people.

The initial resistance of the Mizos to western medicine introduced by both the colonial government and the Mission enterprise can be gathered from successive articles that appeared in the *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu* in 1913. One such article stated, "The Mizos abhorred or had an aversion to the use of western medicines due to the belief that the composition of such medicines included various organs of the human body such as the fats, brain, eyes etc."³ Such assumptions arose out of the belief that when a dead body was post-mortemed by the doctor, the various organs of the body were then extracted in the process in order to make medicine. This has been corroborated by an extract from Rev. J. H. Lorrain's letter, who was one of the pioneer missionary to the Hills ⁴

Further, the *Mizo Leh Vai Canchinbu* can be said to be an instrumental factor in highlighting the initial Mizo attitude as to the efficacy of modern medicines and where consulting a doctor was concerned. An article in the *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhahu*, December 1905, highlights how a woman was bitten by a snake on her foot after an hour of which she then lost her power of speech, and although a doctor later operated on the foot and the woman got well again, initially a doctor was not called for her on the pretext that even the doctors would not be able to do anything for her.⁵ This serves to highlight that even by the early 1900s, the Mizos had not sufficiently grasped the curative nature of western medicine nor accepted the services of medical professionals fully.

Further, from certain articles one can glean that misconceptions as to the usage of western medicine was also prevalent then. It would seem that when consulting a doctor, it was quite common for people to ask for specific medicines to the doctor without even disclosing their ailments or the type of sickness they suffered. One such misconception was the belief that all ailments could be cured by a single medicine. An article in the May issue of 1909 by S.A Shahid, a Government medical personnel provides insight on such misconceptions on the part of the Mizos. According to him, a medicine named Iodoform which was used to cure only certain abscesses and skin ulcers was usually requested by the people for healing all types of abscesses and wounds.⁶

Further, misconceptions as to the use and application of common medicines of the time like Chlorodyne (a

medicine used to treat diarrhoea), Iodine and China balm (Kawl damdawi or Tiger balm) have been cited. It would seem that there were many instances wherein people tended to consume Chlorodyne without consulting a doctor.⁷ As far as iodine was concerned, people often mistook the latter with Chlorodyne due to the similarity in the bottles used as a result of which serious illness or death often occurred.⁸ China balm was to be applied externally in cases of joint pains, rheumatism etc. There were however instances wherein some people proclaimed its positive effects for the cure of such diseases as cholera and dysentery.⁹

Further, the *Kristian Tlangau* was to a large extent instrumental in the promotion and maintenance of health care undertaken by civil society organizations such as the Lushai Hills District Red Cross Society and the Young Mizo Association (YMA). It may be noted that in India, the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) was set up under Act XV of 1920¹⁰ and the same was extended to Mizoram in the early 1930s with due support from the government. In the various monthly issues of the *Kristian Tlangau*, what occasionally comes across are the various notifications of the Red Cross Committee which aimed at the upliftment of public health, to educate the masses in matters of health and sanitation especially through the proclamation of 'goodwill messages'. Such 'goodwill messages' were health messages generally accompanied by articles on the concerned subject and disseminated to the public through not only through the mentioned sources but also as printed captions posted or hung where it could be seen by one and all and made known to the general public in every village.

The *Kristian Tlangau* has also been particularly important in projecting the organised efforts towards public health by a non- political, voluntary organisation– The Young Lushai Association (YLA), founded on 15 June 1935 and later changed to Young Mizo Association (YMA). Since there has never been any organised effort by a non- political voluntary organisation in the maintenance of public health on a massive scale, the YLA has since its inception shouldered such a responsibility. It has acted as an important instrument in disseminating to the masses not only the various undertakings and programmes of the said organisation but also in creating awareness and maintenance of community health. It may be noted that from June 1936 till 1954, various YLA news and articles were appended to the *Kristian Tlangau* under the caption, '*Kristian Tlangau Thubelh, Young Lushai Association*'.

The YLA supplement was generally replete with various articles and notifications as to how people could maintain good health, answers and advices on queries on health care, sanitation rules etc. It further included many articles by individuals as well as the speeches made by YLA leaders. In fact, the various monthly issues of the *Kristian Tlangau* gives us many insight on the developmental works undertaken by the YLA in the direction of health care.

The print media was also instrumental in reflecting the colonial government's efforts towards the implementation of public health. In the *Kristian Tlangau*, we occasionally come across various notifications as to how Village Welfare Committees were set up by the colonial administration under the guidance of the Lushai Hills District Red Cross

Society. Through the establishment of such Committees, it was felt that any information which the colonial authority deemed necessary and which concerned the public would be easily disseminated to the masses such as the improvement of fooding, hygiene, health, child welfare, anti-natal and post -natal care.¹¹

Finally, although the *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu* and *Kristian Tlangau* had served as important conduits to educate the Mizos in matters of health care, in the process however, the many health measures which the colonial government attempted to implement through them did provide an aura of legitimacy to colonial rule. In fact, the print media aptly provided space for colonial knowledge production, exercise of power and technological innovation. Thereby, many of the opinions in the articles so cited can be said to be reflective of colonial influence particularly that of the Christian missionaries who based their writings on Christian perspectives.

In spite of all these, the *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu* and *Kristian Tlangau* have filled the gap in the dearth of records such as those from the official documents, Christian missionary accounts as well as from the writings of Mizo historians. They in fact served as ‘windows’ through which to view Mizo society. Further, health services imparted by both the government and the mission also took a greater role in public affairs wherein the said publications acted as common platforms through which the people could express their views, ideas and opinions. In fact, through the *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu* and *Kristian Tlangau*, we are able to perceive to an extent the reaction and attitude of the people

brought about by the introduction of western medicines and health care which ranged from doubt, cautiousness and resistance to suspicion although there were those who welcomed it with open arms. It can be said that as forces of indigenous articulations, they were relevant source materials in advancing our understandings which has enabled the possibility of constructing the history of health care in Mizoram in the colonial period.

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EXPLORING THE NEW WORLD: THE FIRST WORLD WAR EXPERIENCE

Malsawmdawngliana

Although the First World War may seem to have been confined to a conflict between the imperial powers, yet, it's significance was even felt at the remote corner of Lushai Hills who were under the British empire. While the great wars cost millions of lives with untold miseries, it somehow affected the people of the hills in positive ways. The post British era, with the introduction of western education and a new religion, gradually changed the worldview of the Mizos. The progress of these changes were enhanced by the first world war as it acted as an agent of change and the life beyond the hills for the first time became a matter of intense interest.¹ For a society that had lived in isolation for centuries, it opened up an avenue to participate in the world affairs, which made transformation in their inter-personal relations and community as a whole.

A Call for Volunteers

As the cost of war increased in terms of man power and money, the British began to recruit volunteers from its colonies. The Lushai Hills which was recently pacified by

the British were in no exception but to join the war. The initial response from the people was appalling as there was a fear psychosis revolving among the parents who were afraid that their sons might not return from the war. As Sanghinga comments:

“It became known in the beginning of January 1917 that the sawrkar [government] wanted at least 2,000 men to go work in France where the war raged. Some recalled the talk of how dangerous it was and they feared going ... Several elderly men and women strongly expressed the opinion that they would never allow their children to be sent to die. Others also kept saying that, once they reached the place [of the war], the authorities would put them in the line of fire [‘make them shoot the enemy’] and not allow them do the things they had volunteered for.”²

The British government, in examining the situation and trying to woo the people, soon declared that the families of the volunteers will be free from force labour (Kuli) and house tax and be generously paid. This acted as a big relief for the Mizos as the government demanded labour from the village to carry the loads of the soldiers who were on the move. We have witnessed a series of resistance against this order in the past. In spite of all the benefits rendered by the government, some of the Mizos were reluctant to the call. Vawmphunga said that the chief sent those whom he considered as less worthy villagers.³

A tale about the overwhelming war filled the pages of Mizo leh Vai Chanchin – the only secular newspaper that existed during those times. The literate Mizos narrated the tale in a fashionable manner that somehow captured the

minds and ears of the villages. Knowledge about the war was a matter of pride among the village folks.

The Mizo response to the call for war was different from other parts of India's North East as in the case of Manipur, it triggered a major revolt against the British.⁴ The royal family of the chiefs who were loyal to the British also helped in gathering the volunteers. Dohleia, the son of Khamliana, chief of Lungleng and an ally of the British, made a rigorous campaign that won over the people's heart in volunteering to go to France.

A journey to Europe

A dozen of Mizos joined the St John's Ambulance Corps and also the Army Bearer Corps.⁵ Lorraine recorded that many more would have gone but as the standard of height fixed by the government prevented them, only a few men were qualified. ⁶Apart from the Army Bearer Corps, A Labour Battalion consisting of a strong 2100 young men volunteered themselves and assembled at Assam Rifles' Ground at Aizawl on 25th April 1917. Since the people of the hills had never seen such a big gathering, they believed that they would surely inflict heavy casualties to the Germans.⁷

The Mizos found the journey from India to Europe fascinating; they marched to Silchar in the plains and were told to board a train. They were in awe of the tunnels and iron bridges which they had never seen before. After reaching Calcutta (Kolkata), other trains took them to Bombay. After a long voyage on the Red Sea, they finally reached France in the middle of June 1917.

At the war front

The Mizos were stationed at the war front; their main job was to dismantle deserted trenches and dugouts and send the wooden planks to be re-used where the battle ensued. While working under adverse condition, the Lushai Corps proved to be brave and hardworking and they even received appreciation from their British Commanders. W.L. Scott, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills comments:

“...after they were accustomed to the climate and being quick in their work, though small and short in stature they could always finish their jobs sooner than others. The officer of the Labour Corps always appreciated and praised their industry and the outturn of their labour. As they were somewhat near the firing line the enemy’s long range gun shelled their camps and sometimes Aeroplanes also dropped bombs on the camps but the Lushais were always steady and they never showed alarm...The commandants of the companies who came to Aijal also highly praised the officers and men under their commands and left their high opinion on record.”⁸

Life in the war front was tough and dangerous with the requirement to move frequently as the fighting moved back and forth. They struggled and survived a cold, icy winter and even felt home sick. However, they displayed great chivalry and workmanship. Lorrain also reported that during the great German offensive in March 1918, the Mizos worked so well under fire that they earned special commendation and they were able to withdraw from the danger zone without a single casualty. ⁹

Church in Aid

The Church in Wales was constantly in touch with the Mizos in France. Gifts and parcels were regularly sent to them.¹⁰ DE Jones, the Welsh Missionary in Mizoram, sailed along with the newly recruited Lushai Labour Corps both as a chaplain and interpreter, and was given a rank of honorary captain.¹¹ JH Lorrain was also requested by YMCA for Hut work in France for four months. Since he was on furlough, it was quite convenient for him to respond to the call, which he did.¹² The generous aid given by the Church of Wales steadily cemented trust and loyalty in the hearts of the Mizos.

War Bond at home

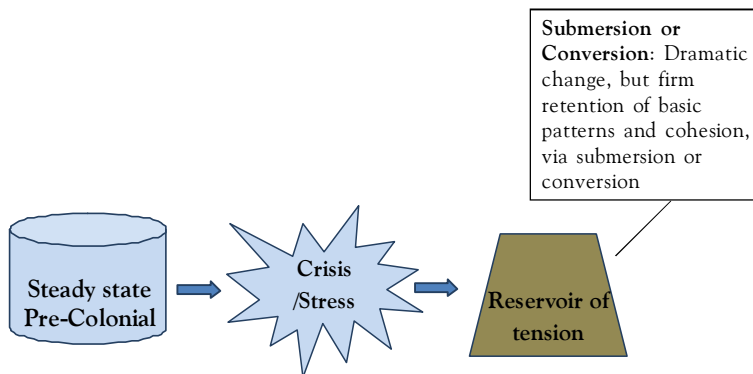
In order to raise money for the war, HAC Colquhoun, the Superintendent of the Luhsai Hills, made an appeal to the people through Mizo leh Vai Journal to help the government in the war by making their money available for the government, either by depositing in postal savings or buying war Bond.¹³ Despite the earlier resistance shown by Mizo Chiefs towards the British, they were now allies. Khamliana is a fine example of one such chief who contributed a sum of rupees one thousand.

Home again

The Mizos, after serving for one year and two months in 1918, returned back home although the government made incentives to stay back and renew their contract. They were even invited to visit London and other big cities in England, but only Taite-a agreed to this invitation while others were furious at the thought of extending their stay away from home. One of them even said he would rather go back to

see an old chicken hut in his verandah than stay and see London. ¹⁴The nostalgic feelings even made them write letters to their relatives about their eagerness to return home. After the long journey back home, they received a hero's welcome. The home coming was accorded with an elaborate reception at Chanmari, Aizawl with an honour of military band. Out of 2,100 Mizo men who left for France, 71 died there or on the way. Those who survived the war brought back a wealth of information about the outside world.¹⁵

Understanding the changes in worldview



As seen in the above figure, we begin with the ideal of a steady state, where the Lushais lived in isolation unperturbed by the external forces. However, after the occupation of the Hills by the British, the introduction of education and Christianity gradually altered the worldview of the Mizos which produced significant cultural stress. This resulted in a reconstruction of their history, which was also enhanced by the First World War experiences. This stress built and produced what Tippet calls “a reservoir of tension.” This is “a built-up communal experience which only requires a spark to explode it”.¹⁶ The society, though experiencing

this build up of tension with its explosive potential for dramatic cultural change, preserved what Tippetts labels “ethnic cohesion” – the fundamental cultural glue that makes and keeps a people a people. Thus, there is production of a kind of hybrid culture that converts into western culture while still retaining the ethnic culture. At some point, however, something may happen to “ignite” the reservoir. Precipitating dramatic change and innovation, issuing in conversion, or submersion, yet without disrupting the fundamental configurationally patterns that hold a people together, providing them with security and an identity. Intangible culture like composing of a song “German Run Zai” is one of the fine examples we can get out of this production.

The other consequence was that, for the first time, the world beyond the hills became a subject of interest. The first Mizos to visit Kolkata, in the 1870s, had been decidedly uninterested and ‘the magnificence of the City of Palaces did not apparently impress them ... on the whole, the balance of their minds inclined in favour of their own hill-tops’. ¹⁷ It expanded their horizon which had so far been limited to a few miles in the plains in the north and the Chin Hills in the east. It created a will to get education, especially for young girls. ¹⁸

One of the spectacular changes was in dress and hairstyle as the people developed an admiration for the European lifestyle. Before the World War, the boys usually kept their hair long and wore it in a bun at the back and front. Only 4 or 5 of them got their hair cut. A satire was even composed for the ones who cut their hair. However,

the returnees cut their hair in western style and only very few of them came back with the same hairstyle.¹⁹

The Mizos' participation in the war changed the mental attitude of the Mizos in two ways. Firstly, they started to have a sense of belongingness to the wider British Empire. Secondly, their minds were opened to readily accept the gospel thereby helping the missionaries in their evangelizing mission.

On the other hand, their experience and recognition for their good work during the war naturally gave the Mizos a new confidence in themselves. Their service in war, though confined to a menial job, gave them a chance to prove to themselves that they were better than the others.²⁰ The building up of self-realization and self-respect ignited the formation of consciousness in building their identity as a 'Mizo'.

The Mizos experiencing the First World War were immense as their history underwent a great change with the cultures that were adopted from outside. It is further interesting to know how the Mizos positioned themselves to these new realities. The Mizo society, though experiencing this built-up tension with its explosive potential for dramatic cultural change, preserved what Tippetts labels "ethnic cohesion" –the fundamental cultural glue that makes and keeps a people a people. This produced a kind of hybrid culture that converted into western culture while still retaining the ethnic culture by not losing their cultural bearings. With this new reorientation, they successfully created a new identity under the banner of 'Mizo' which will be a guiding map for centuries to come.

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THE HISTORY OF LAKHER PIONEER MISSIONARIES

Chawngkhuma Chawngthu

Introduction

The Maras formally known as Lakher occupied the south eastern corner part of Mizoram. The area of their occupied land is 1445 sq.km. The maximum dimension of the occupied area from north to south is 75 km., and 49 km. from east to west. With the inclusion of the small southern part, the occupied area is encircled by the famous river Beino or Chhimtuipui.

The Maras belonged to the Mongoloid stock of people. Based on their socio-linguistic distinctiveness, the Maras are distinctive and different from their neighbouring tribes. They were hardy and warlike people. In the olden days they always raided their neighbouring tribes and they even fought among themselves.

The Maras were superstitious and religious people. In the olden days they were animist worshipping different gods. They believed in the existence of evil spirits in rivers, lakes, mountains, big trees, rocks, etc. which could cause many

undesirable diseases, even death. However, all these traditional beliefs and practices were now abolished as they have all embraced Christianity.

Founder of Lakher Pioneer Mission

The founder of Lakher Pioneer Mission, Reginald Arthur Lorrain was born on the 10th July, 1880 in London. He had three brothers and one sister. His eldest brother was J.H.Lorrain who had worked as one of the Baptist Missionaries at Serkawn, Lunglei.

After finishing his Junior Cambridge from Wutheriff Grammar School, Reginald Arthur Lorrain went to Canada searching for a job. He then got the job to look after Agricultural farm. However, he was not satisfied to stay for a longer period in Canada. He therefore went to Texas where he worked as a clerk in a cattle rearing farm. After staying for four years in Mexico, he returned to London to work as a clerk in London Bank.

While working in the bank, R. A. Lorrain received a call from the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel. He therefore approached the Baptist Missionary Society to send him as one of the missionaries. However, he was turned down by the Baptist Missionary Society of London due to non-availability of fund.

Establishment of Lakher Pioneer Mission

Though the Baptist Missionary Society of London turned him down as their missionary, R. A. Lorrain could not stop his plan to preach the Gospel to unbelievers. After praying many times to the heavenly God, R.A. Lorrain

founded the Lakher Pioneer Mission on 11th February, 1905 at London with a few friends. He was the first Director of the Lakher Pioneer Mission. The first funding which had been received by the Lakher Pioneer Mission was 45 pounds given by an English widow.

Sweet letter

It is a wonderful and sweet story for the Mara people that one converted Mara man Hrengpuma of Phalhrang, who was the son of a Chief, and also one of the old students of J.H. Lorrain wrote a letter to J.H. Lorrain, the Baptist missionary at Serkawn. The letter says:

To,

zosap,

*Ka pu thu tlomte shoi ka duh a ka shoi ngam lova ithuka loawi
ve ani thla thum 3 lai ka loawi ta ani. Ka pu ka lal pui te in nang in
Pathian thu ka awi iti a engma hlaw i hmu shi lo mi ti a mi rel mi rel
a ka pu zosap nang ma te mi khawngai dawn nge lehkha mi han
thawn ang che aw min khawngaih takin Pathian thu lehkha min han
thawn roh kapu nangma ka nu leh ka pa ai in ka shoi fak zawk a che.*

Hrengpuma Phalhrang

Karani

The above letter was received by J. H. Lorrain at Serkawn in the month of August 1905. As soon as the letter of Hrengpuma was received, J. H. Lorrain sent it to his brother R. A. Lorrain who had been in London. Upon receiving the letter, R. A. Lorrain was very happy and glad because the letter might be the second calling by God to preach the Gospel among the Maras.

Before going to Maraland, R. A. Lorrain joined the Livingstone Medical College in London for medical training which would be very helpful for his future missionary work. After completion of one year medical training, R. A. Lorrain got married to a beautiful lady, Maud Louise Ulander on the 12th November, 1906. The new couple then left London on the 18th January, 1907 to preach the Gospel among the Maras. After spending 254 days on the way, R. A. Lorrain and his wife reached Maraland on the 26th September, 1907.

The Work of the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries

Though many points are to be mentioned with regard to the work of the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries, only few points would be put forward this time.

Alphabet: In the absence of alphabet, the Maras were having no written documents from time immemorial. However, R.A. Lorrain reduced the Mara language into a written form. He, therefore, made the Mara alphabet in Roman script. The alphabet is given below:

A	AW	Y	B	CH	D	E	H	I	K
L	M	N	Ng	O	Ô	P	R	S	T
U	V	Z	AO	YU					

This alphabet is used as a medium of instruction in the school as well as by the Mara Autonomous District Council as official language.

School: One of the important works of the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries was the opening of the school. The first ever school was opened in the month of April, 1908 at

Saikao village. The length of the school building was 25 ft. and the width was 15 ft. The school building was made of bamboo and thatch. The first students of the school were Mawkha and Lairo of Siaha village.

The Church: The first church of the Maras was established on the 16th September, 1910 and the first converted Christian was Thytu. Other converted Christians were Chiahui in 1911, Laila in 1911, Seiu in 1915, Leipo in 1915, Lado in 1915, Rhollai in 1915, and Leikha in 1915. Within five years i.e. 1910-1915, there were ten converted Christians. However, these converted Christians were baptized in the year 1918.

In the beginning, the converted Christians had no proper place to assemble in praise of God. However, the first Christian church building was constructed in 1916 at Saikao village. In this way, the number of Christians were increasing every year and the total number of Christians in the year 1924 was 272.

Dispensary: The Maras were very simple and ignorant with regard to medicine. They always used local-made medicines like tree bark, tree leaves, etc. to relieve their pain. However, R. A. Lorrain who had good experiences with regard to medicinal works opened a dispensary at their residence. The dispensary was opened every evening and they used to help the local people in giving medicine like MB, Quinine, Potassium Permanganate, Carminative etc. The medicinal work is mainly looked after by Maud Louise Ulander, the wife of R. A. Lorrain.

Printing press: Another important work of the Lakher Pioneer Mission was the establishment of the Printing Press. With a view for improvement with regard to making books and magazines, R. A. Lorrain installed a mini Printing Press at Saikao in 1921.

This Printing Press was very useful for making books, magazines, newsletters, etc. It can be said that the Printing Press is the backbone of the Lakher Pioneer Mission in making the Bible, the hymnal books, etc.

Magazine: The first magazine of the Lakher Pioneer Mission was published in 1924 and the name of the Magazine was 'KRIZYHPA CHIAMIE' (The Trumpet). The Magazine was written in Mara language. This was very helpful in giving important information among the Christians. This magazine is still continued even today by the Evangelical Church of Maraland. It is written in Mara language and Mizo language.

Women school : With a view to improving and upgrading of the low position of women among the Maras, women school was opened in 1929. This school was looked after by Maud Louise Ulander and Irene Hadley.

This school was opened every day and the Mara women learned reading and writing. Besides reading and writing, they also learnt knitting and sewing clothes. This school played a very important role for the progress and empowerment of the position of Mara women.

Hymn book : One of the notable works of the Lakher pioneer missionaries was the making of hymnal book. The first hymnal book containing 37 hymns was published in 1910. The second book was published in 1912 in which there were 68 songs. The third book which contained 179 songs was published in 1918.

Most of the songs were translated by the missionaries from various English song books. However, R.A. Lorrain composed 5 songs and his wife Maud Louise Ulander composed 3 songs.

At present, there are 610 Christian songs in the Hymnal Book of the Maras out of which 232 were contributed by the Lakher pioneer missionaries.

Books: The work of the Lakher pioneer missionaries in making books can be divided into Religion and Secular. The work of the missionaries on religion is mainly concerned with making of booklets, translation book, etc. The number of books which they published was 35.

With regard to the secular line, the missionaries published various books like History, Geography, Dictionary, Grammar, School Textbooks, etc. The secular books which can be seen were 12 in number.

The Soldier of Cross: With a view to helping him in the work of his mission, R.A. Lorrain established the Soldier of Cross in 1933. He selected those who had good qualities in their character as the members of the Soldier of Cross. There were 14 members in the Soldier of Cross. These soldiers

were paid a small amount of money as part of honorarium. They were very helpful in preaching the Gospel.

Politics: The contribution of the Lakher pioneer missionaries on politics was very important and fruitful. R. A. Lorrain was a very close friend of the Chief of Saikao named Chhohmo. He used to give good advice in regard to modern political movement. With the advice of R. A. Lorrain, about 23 Chiefs of the Maras held an assembly at Saikao in 1945. The assembly resolved that a Regional Council would be made for the Maras and they submitted an application to the President of India for making a Regional Council for the Maras. In this way, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was created in 1953 for the people of Pawi and Lakher. Now, the Maras have their own administration which is called the Mara Autonomous District Council.

Motherless Baby Home: Another important work of the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries was the establishment of Motherless Baby home at Saikao village in 1959. Many motherless babies were looked after in this home. This motherless baby home is still continued in Saikao village even today.

Cattle farm: R. A. Lorrain was very interested in making cattle farm. He had a vast area of land near his residence. He, therefore, reared horses, cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, as well as dogs. These animals were looked after by well-trained persons. The animals like pigs, sheep and chicken were killed for making special feast in the Church's programme.

Agricultural farm: The Lakher pioneer missionaries were very industrious and they worked very hard in making Agricultural farm. They used to cultivate banana, orange, pine apple, guava, passion fruit, etc. In the olden days, the trees of Mulberry were not available in the Mara areas. But the Lakher pioneer missionaries brought these kind of trees.

Translation of the Holy Bible: One of the greatest works of the Lakher pioneer missionaries was the translation of the Holy Bible. The New Testament was translated into Mara in 1927 and the Holy Bible was translated in 1956 by the missionaries. The Holy Bible was published and released in the same year.

Conclusion

The founder of the Lakher Pioneer Mission, R. A. Lorrain died in 1944 at Saikao village. He faithfully served the Gospel of Jesus Christ for 37 years. After his death, the Lakher Pioneer Mission was looked after by his faithful wife Maud Louise Ulander and his son-in-law Albert Bruce Foxall. The faithful wife Maud Louise Ulander also served the Gospel of Jesus Christ for 53 years. She also passed away on the 23rd May, 1960 at the age of 85. After the death of Maud Louise Ulander, the Lakher Pioneer Mission was looked after by Albert Bruce Foxall. As time passed by, the faithful servant of God Albert Bruce also passed away at the age of 79 in 1977. The last Lakher pioneer missionary is still alive at present. Her name is Violet Louise Anne Mark. The local people call her 'Vaili'. Mrs. Violet Louise Anne Mark was born in 1938. She got married to L. Mark, a Mara man and they have three sons and one daughter. All their children

are grown up. The last Lakher pioneer missionary Mrs. Violet Louise Anne Mark is now 80 years old.

It can thus, be said that most of the present developments and achievements which can be seen in the socio-economic scenario of the Mara society may be said as the result of the works of Lakher Pioneer missionaries.

It is once again notable to be mentioned here that, all the family members of R.A. Lorain who have died among the Maras have been buried in the Mara soil. This wonderful story has clearly revealed that the genealogical generation of R.A. Lorrain would totally be lost among the British community. This is a wonderful history for Lakher pioneer missionaries as well as mankind. However, R.A. Lorrain and his fellow missionaries who have been buried in the Mara soil would surely receive certain amount of reward in heaven.

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